

THE
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ART. I.—INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT.

I MUST beseech the good-natured public not to accuse me of trifling with them. When I declared, three months ago, that the publication of this journal was ended, I little thought that it would ever be resumed, much less under my editorial care. I wished for rest, and felt that I needed it; and I trust I shall be believed when I say that it is with unfeigned reluctance, that I reënter a career which I then flattered myself I had abandoned forever.

Why I have been induced to resume without delay the editorial labors, which I declared to be ended, does not concern the public. I have been assured that the work was doing good, and that it ought not to be discontinued. Some partisan prints have spoken harshly of it, since I announced its discontinuance, and this I have regarded as an indication that it was not altogether useless. The publisher has also thought it worth continuing under a business point of view, and as several distinguished literary friends, whose contributions cannot fail to be a public benefit, have generously proffered me their assistance, I have concluded to go on with it, and do as well by it as my health and ability will permit.

I resume this publication under circumstances somewhat different from those under which I commenced it. Before undertaking this Review, I had rendered myself, so far as known, not a little unpopular, by my association with the working-men's party, and my bold and uncompromising defence of the laboring classes. I was obliged to stand alone. Individuals, who enjoyed some reputation in the community, although entertaining views nearly coincident with my own, were chary of acknowledging the fact, and would have shrunk from recognising any periodical, which I should conduct, as their organ. There was no sect or party that would not have spurned my proffered assistance. I felt therefore that, in justice to others, I must make my Review the organ merely of my individual sentiments, so that, if my heresies should incur reproach, no one but myself would be obliged to share it, and if the publication failed, no one but myself would be affected by the disgrace which always accompanies an unsuccessful undertaking.

But I view the matter somewhat differently now. I do not now feel that I am alone, that the work to which I am devoted is in any sense peculiar to myself. They who share my views, I doubt not, are as willing to coöperate with me as with any one else. I will not now do them the injustice to think that they will regard a periodical, devoted to the cause they approve, as unworthy of support because I am its conductor. The Review therefore ceases to be merely the organ of an individual, and aspires to the broad and generous character, more befitting a literary periodical. Two years' experience has convinced me, that there is even reputation to be acquired by a bold and manly defence of the general principles this Review has put forth; and therefore I have no hesitation in stating clearly and distinctly its leading design, and in calling upon all those who approve it to give it a liberal support.

As heretofore this journal will be devoted to Religion, Philosophy, Politics, and general Literature. In

relation to all these subjects, it has fixed doctrines, which it will labor diligently to bring out and defend. What these doctrines are, may be collected from the two volumes already issued. But a few words by way of explanation, perhaps, will not be deemed impertinent by any class of readers.

The great idea, which constitutes the life and unity of the Review, is that of freedom. The Review is instituted for the purpose of carrying freedom into all subjects, and into all the relations of life. It approaches all subjects of thought with freedom; it holds nothing too sacred to be examined, and claims the right to reject whatever cannot abide the test of pure reason. But by freedom is not meant lawlessness. Man is under law, and under law it is his glory to remain, if the laws to which he is subjected be coincident with the decrees of Eternal Justice.

Into religion, as well as other matters, it carries the spirit of free inquiry. Religion is a great subject. Nothing does or can affect us more intimately. It ought then to be examined with freedom, though of course with an earnest and reverent spirit. It is only by submitting religion to the test of reason, in like manner as we do politics and natural science, that we can check infidelity, and recall the community to a firm and living faith in Christianity. In taking up this subject, my aim has long been, and I trust ever will be, not to lessen the authority of religion, nor to render it less awe-inspiring, but to infuse into its study the spirit of liberal science. I know from my own experience, that few things are more influential in stirring up hostility in the minds of youth against religion, than the misguided zeal of its friends, which would withdraw it from the free action of reason. There is a period in our lives, to say the least, when we would know why we believe, and when we protest with all the energy of our nature against all attempts to check free thought, and to chain us down to a cold, formal assent to doctrines, for the reasonableness of which there is nothing in our own experience to

vouch, and which must be accepted on an authority, the legitimacy of which we do not perceive. It is in vain, when we are in this state of protest, indignant at all intellectual restraint, to bid us not examine, but believe. Whoso would render religion a service, must begin by respecting the rights of the mind.

But as to the actual doctrines inculcated, saving the forms in which they may be clothed, I do not apprehend that they will differ essentially from what has been and is the universal faith of the Christian church. As we grow older, as we inquire more earnestly, and with a broader experience, into religious matters, we have a natural tendency to return to the simple faith of our childhood, and we become less and less inclined to depart from commonly received opinions. We start in youth, strong in ourselves, exulting in our exuberant life, confident in our own resources, but destitute of experience. We have powerful intuitions, but no clear insight, no real understanding of the mysteries of our spiritual nature. We know not the world we carry about with us, and have no presentiment of the wants which will one day spring up in the unknown depths of the soul. The great doctrines of religion, which have been embraced in all ages, and in which religious people take so deep an interest, find then no echo in our experience. We have lived nothing which can interpret them and give them a significance. They are to us unmeaning. The interest taken in them appears to us affected, often a base hypocrisy, and the eulogistic terms in which they are spoken of, disgusting cant. But as we take our share in the rough and tumble of life, as we become torn by internal conflicts, worn out by the wars ever renewed between the flesh and the spirit, and convinced by repeated failures of our own insufficiency for ourselves, we begin to discover a significance in these hitherto rejected doctrines, and no longer laugh at the scholastic distinctions of "common grace," and "efficient grace." As our own experience becomes broad enough and deep enough, to disclose the psychological facts,

on which the great doctrines of the church rest for their support, we see that these priests and these fanatical multitudes, that we had looked down upon in the pride of our ignorance, have not been altogether in the wrong, as we had supposed them. We feel that they have had, though often without knowing it, reason on their side, and that it was our own inexperience that had made us think otherwise.

I remember well the time, when the Bible was to me a revolting book, when I could find no meaning in it, and when I could not believe that religious people could honestly regard it as they professed to regard it. Its very style and language were offensive, and if I was called upon to write upon religious topics, I took good care to avoid, as much as possible, the use of its phraseology. But it is not so with me now. Life has developed within me wants which no other book can satisfy. Say nothing now of the divine origin of the Bible; take it merely as an ancient writing which has come down to us, and it is to me a truly wonderful production. I take up the writings of the most admired geniuses of ancient or modern times; I read them, and relish them; and yet there is a depth in my experience they do not fathom. This is much, I say; but I have lived more than is here; I have wants this does not meet; it records only a moiety of my experience. But with the Bible it is not so. Whatever my state, its authors seem to have anticipated it. Whatever anomaly in my experience I note, they seem to have recorded it. What experience these men had, if indeed they spoke from experience! It is well called the Book, for it is the book in which seems to be registered all that the individual or the race ever has lived, or ever can live. It is all here. If I would bow down with sorrow for sin, and pour out my soul in deep contrition for my wanderings, here are the very words I want, and words terribly expressive. If I would break forth in thanksgiving for release from the bonds of iniquity, and shout in exulting strains my forgiveness, here is the hymn already composed, which

exactly meets the temper of my mind. Then, again, even the language of our common English version, ridiculed as it often has been, is after all the only language, in which I can utter the spiritual facts which are developed within me. I seek to vary the expression, to select what I may regard as an equivalent but more elegant term, and somehow or other the soul of the passage escapes, and I find remaining nothing but a lifeless form of words. It does not therefore seem strange to me now, though it once did, the attachment the Christian world has to this venerable Book, nor the tenacity with which they, who speak the English tongue, hold on to our common version, in spite of the defects which criticism justly points out.

But notwithstanding all this, I should rebel, should the attempt be made to *force* me to receive the Bible as the word of God. I receive it as the word of God, because I have reproduced much of it in my own soul; because I am conscious of that within me which vouches for its divinity. And no man can really receive it as the word of God, till his own experience has developed within him the need of it, and furnished him the key to its meaning. Our own life must lead us to it. We must be initiated into the mysteries of religion in the temple of our own souls, and then, and not till then, shall we comprehend the significance of the Bible, and the doctrines of grace. The natural man receiveth not the things of the spirit; they are foolishness to him, for they are spiritually discerned. Here is the doctrine of experimental religion, and its justification too. And here is the heresy which I profess, and shall defend.

I claim the right to examine all doctrines, and to interpret them by my own experience; but I hold myself bound to rectify my own experience by the recorded experience of the race; and hence it is that I always regard the fact, that a doctrine has been widely disseminated, long believed, and able to take a firm hold on the heart of the race, as a strong presumption of its truth. The human race is no doubt

liable to err, but he who should contend that it can embrace unmixed error, and be altogether in the wrong, would deprive himself in advance of all evidence, wherewith to prove himself in the right. I have no faculty for perceiving and recognising truth, which was not possessed equally by all who went before me. If that faculty could be wholly at fault in them, how know I that it is not equally at fault in me? The wise man does not reject the doctrines which past ages have bequeathed him; he merely seeks to comprehend them.

At present the doctrines of the church seem to me to be buried beneath a heap of words, which to the generality of men have very little of meaning. People do not look beneath those words; they seem to me to stop at the Idol and not to penetrate to the Idea; to prostrate themselves before the carved image, without recognising the Numen, which it should shadow forth. The many who worship, though moved by a religious impulse, are to a great extent idolaters. The church symbols need not be destroyed, nor warred against; but if we would have men bow down and worship with true adoration, with gratitude and joy, with profit to their souls, we must interpret these symbols anew, and express the truths they conceal, in words adapted to the present state of the human understanding.

Much space, as heretofore, will be devoted to the discussion of metaphysical subjects. This perhaps will not be regarded as a recommendation of the Review. Metaphysics do not enjoy the best reputation in the world. Many sensible people regard all time and thought, bestowed upon metaphysical studies, as so much time and thought thrown away; for they entertain the notion that these studies serve no useful purpose; that they merely tend to draw off attention from the practical affairs of life, to multiply jarring and contradictory systems, to fill the brain with perplexing subtilties, and to overload every subject of

human inquiry with needless and unmeaning distinctions. But are these people correct? This is not an idle question; but who can answer it without resorting to those very metaphysical studies they condemn? We all of us, consciously or unconsciously, are continually resorting to these studies; and whoever asks, *Why?* or, *Wherefore?* in relation to any subject whatever, affirms them to be indispensable.

Then these, too, are stirring times; times in which all is agitated and nothing settled. Men are everywhere loosened from their old moorings, and afloat upon a tumultuous ocean, at the mercy of the winds and waves. A spirit of free inquiry has gone abroad, and keen and searching glances are sent into all subjects. All that men have heretofore regarded as sacred and well established is arraigned and put upon its defence. Old opinions are recklessly abandoned, new views are rashly put forth, new creeds are proposed, new institutions projected, and an entire reorganization of the human race contended for. Surely this is not a condition of things, a wise lover of peace and security, of God and man, would desire to see rendered permanent. But how shall we change it? Not by declaiming against it. It is useless to dwell on the danger it threatens. A terrible spirit has been raised, and there is no charm in eloquence, none in authority, to exorcise it. The evil we see and apprehend can be averted only by searching to the bottom our general faculty of knowing, by determining with what it is we know, what it is that we can know, what are the grounds and conditions of all science. Now to attempt to do this is precisely what it is to engage in the study of metaphysics. Metaphysics are the science of science, that which determines the ground and conditions of science in general. Without them, it is impossible to make any scientific progress, beyond that of amassing materials for science.

There is no distrust among us of the physical sciences. But the physical sciences repose upon a metaphysical basis. It is the metaphysician who furnishes

the naturalist his method, and legitimates his inductions. The instrument, used in the construction of the natural sciences, is the human intelligence, and to determine the value and right manner of using the intelligence, belongs to the metaphysician. Before he had determined this, the naturalist made but slow progress. Men looked on nature with open eyes and keen senses before the time of Bacon, but it was not till he had taught them how to observe her features, and how to question her, that she began in very deed to surrender to them her secrets.

This age devotes much attention to the study of history, which is well; for the hoary past contains much that we need to know. We are but the continuation and development of what has gone before us. What has placed us where we are, and made us what we are? Strike out the metaphysical sciences, and how will you answer these questions? Reject these sciences, and take your stand where you will, you are in the labyrinth, and no Ariadne at hand to furnish you the thread. Reject these sciences, and tell me, I pray you, the meaning of that fierce and long continued struggle between Greece and the great King, of the deadly feuds ever nurtured between Athens and Sparta, of the quarrel between Marius and Sylla, of the victory of Julius over Pompey, of the Guelph and Ghibbeline parties, of the Reformation by Luther, of the French Revolution, of the parties even of our own country; and why it is that silence is rapidly gathering over the memory of our own once idolized Hamilton, while young America pronounces with ever increasing enthusiasm the name of Jefferson? You can tell me nothing of all this. All to you is dark and meaningless; for the torch which shall illumine the historic page, and enable you to read it, must be kindled at the despised taper, whose feeble light glimmers from the window of the solitary metaphysician. The key to the past can be found only by a careful analysis of the elements of human nature, as they present themselves to-day to the eye of individual

consciousness, and which the past was engaged in developing.

The activity of the human race is controlled by a system of ideas. Each nation, too, has its idea, which constitutes its life and unity, and which holds a determinate place in the general system of ideas which presides over the development of Humanity. We can then act with intelligence in neither the cause of our country, nor in that of mankind, without the sciences, which disclose to us the laws by which the race advances, and which involve the destiny of our own nation. There is a logical sequence in the life of a nation. Grant it a given idea to start with, and you may deduce beforehand its history, with perfect accuracy, providing it meets with no counteracting force, to prevent it from following out its idea to its last results. If its idea be a narrow one, one which takes in but a small portion of human nature, it will be short-lived and inglorious. From this fate it can be saved only by speculative thought, a thought which is dependent on no outward circumstances, hemmed in by no bounds of time and space. Philosophy, by disclosing the defectiveness of the reigning idea, and what is needed to supply its deficiency, combining itself with education, passing into text books and professors' lessons, penetrating the hall of legislation, the pulpit, the lyceum, infusing itself into the whole national literature, may gradually enlarge the national idea, bring up from their obscurity other elements of human nature, and finally modify the general character of the nation, give it a higher, a more universal life, and thus prolong its existence, and exalt its glory.

But I am far from proposing in this place to enter into a defence of metaphysical studies. To these studies the public attention has already been drawn, and everywhere in our midst, men, learned and unlearned, are philosophizing with all their might. There is therefore little for us to do now but to see to it, that their philosophizing tend to some account, to ad-

vance the cause of truth, and to promote the honor and dignity of their country.

The philosophy, by whose results we have long been governed, is now passing away. The dominion of Locke is broken up, and he now has only a few adherents, and they are men of yesterday, who can exert no influence on to-morrow. The tendency is just now to an opposite extreme, to what among us is called Transcendentalism, a system of philosophy,—if that may be called a system, which disclaims all system,—which builds upon an order of facts, proceeding from an origin which *transcends* the senses and the operations of the understanding. The source of this order of facts is called by some Instinct, by others Spontaneity, and by others still, Inspiration. They are intuitive and immediate. All among us, who are denominated sometimes the New School, contend for the reality of this order of facts, and so far all who have broken with the past are agreed. But there are some individuals, holding a high rank in the movement party, who regard this order of facts as the only order it is necessary to recognise, and with these they think themselves able to construct a philosophy, which shall explain the existence of God, man, and nature. They therefore pay little attention to the senses, hold reasoning or logic in slight esteem, and treat the demand for proofs of their statements with contempt. With these individuals I do not entirely agree. If I started with them, I could not stop short of exclusive mysticism, and should end in denying the existence of man and the universe. I find also facts in the history of philosophy which I cannot account for on their hypothesis. There can be nothing in the history of philosophy which has not its root in human nature. Now I find, in tracing the history of philosophy, the great systems of sensualism, idealism, and skepticism. If instinct be the only element of human nature, if it be in all men, and always active, as it must be, if it be instinct, and always a teacher of truth, and its own sufficient voucher, I cannot understand how these

other systems could ever have originated, or for one moment been entertained. I recognise spontaneity as a source, and a fruitful source of ideas, and I also admit that the ideas, which come to us from this source, do not require to be proved. But I recognise also other orders of facts, not less real, nor less essential in their place than these. In running away from the sensualism of Locke, I would take care not to lose sight of that portion of reality which his system embraced; and in rejecting logic as an originator of ideas, I would still hold fast to it, as an essential instrument for clearing up our ideas, arranging them in their systematic order, and enabling us to master them. The individuals, to whom I have alluded, have unquestionably a portion of truth, and a portion which for a long time has been denied or neglected, and which is essential to every system of philosophy, that can pretend to do anything like justice to human nature. But, struck with the brilliancy of these facts, their energy, and the enthusiasm they call forth, is it not possible that they have given them an undue prominence, and failed to assign to other facts of human nature, less brilliant, more prosaic, but equally real, the importance they deserve?

In politics, this journal will sustain democratic principles and measures. As a necessary consequence of this, it will coöperate with that party which adopts these principles, and supports these measures,—the democratic party.

This will be regretted by some, who take a deep interest in the religious, philosophical, and literary character of the *Review*. They will regret this, on the one hand, because they do not adopt what I term democratic measures, and on the other hand, because they have imbibed the notion, that the man of letters should stand aloof from the political strife of his countrymen. With regard to the first consideration, it is enough to say, that every man is bound by his duty to his God, his race, and his country, to sup-

port those principles and measures, which he believes to be just and true, without asking whom he may please, or whom he may offend. As it concerns the second consideration, I will only add, it can have no weight with me. Politics is a great subject, one in which every man in this country, if he desire good government, either for himself or for others, should take a deep interest. I have always felt that I belonged to the world, that I was an inhabitant of it; and if I have cultivated letters, if I have devoted some time and thought to abstract speculations, it has been solely for the purpose of gaining the light and the strength, which should fit me for discharging my duty to it.

I am told that I ought to confine myself to first principles, to abstract truth, and not descend to controversies about measures, much less about men. All this is very well, and I would readily do so, could I be persuaded that I, and my fellow men, are nothing but abstractions. But I have painful evidence, that I have a body which connects me with the material interests of the world, and I have no doubt that even those of my friends, who delight so much in the ideal and the abstract, have also a certain portion of flesh and blood which need caring for. The true man, the *whole* man, neglects no interest, overlooks neither body nor soul, but seeks to bring about a reconciliation between spirit and flesh, mind and matter, God and man. He is not the true scholar who removes himself from the practical concerns of life, and holds communion only with an unreal world; and, I own, I have no respect for the philosophy which dwells forever in the abstract, and never steps forth into the world to reduce its theories to practice.

I admit the importance of first principles; few men have shown more attachment to them than I have. I have great faith in them. I wish them always to be resorted to, and always obeyed. But I look into the world as it is; I see contradictory principles set forth, and hostile measures supported. While I am

standing aloof from party strife, while I am studiously avoiding all allusion to what I regard as democratic measures, and am engaged only in dealing forth abstractions, although they shall one day be clothed with life, an anti-democratic party is at work, and securing, it may be, the success of anti-democratic measures—measures which may trammel the whole industry of the country for years to come, and from the deleterious effects of which we shall be able to escape only through rebellion and revolution. Suppose all democrats should do as I am exhorted to do, concern themselves only with first principles, and never seek to carry out those principles by means of appropriate measures, what would be the result? The enemies of the democracy would have the field to themselves, and falsehood would be enthroned, before truth could marshal her forces.

Nor can I consent to the notion, which these friends seem to entertain, that politics is a low and debasing subject, or that a scholar necessarily derogates from his dignity, by engaging in the political movements of his countrymen, and doing what he can to sustain what he believes to be true principles, and to secure to his country the practical blessings of them, by supporting measures which will embody them in laws and institutions. Even the great Goethe, the ideal of many of our literary folks, who are shocked at the idea of a scholar's turning politician, did not disdain to be even a placeman. If he could be a politician, an officeholder, to serve a petty Duke, without derogating from the dignity of letters, surely the scholar may do as much here for the purpose of serving the people. Politics is one of the great concerns of the human race. In this country of universal suffrage, every man ought to be a politician. I say not that he should be a politician and nothing else, but that he should be a politician. If he be a politician, he must concern himself with three things, principles, measures, men. Measures are necessary to carry out the principles, and men are necessary to carry out the mea-

asures. The aim should always be to seek for true principles, and for the measures which those principles demand, and to support men who will support the measures. In regard to the principles, we may keep aloof, to a great extent, from party strife; but the moment we undertake to carry out those principles by means of measures, we enter upon party ground, and must act, if we act at all, with a party, and for and against men. Away then with the cant against politics and party. You must take the world as you find it, reform it with such materials as you have, and in obedience to laws which a higher power than that of man enacts.

Nevertheless, into party strife this journal will enter no farther than to discuss in a calm and philosophic spirit the great principles of political science, and, as occasion demands, to point out in the same spirit the measures which are necessary to reduce those principles to practice. I regard the democratic party of this country not indeed as a perfect party, but as a true movement party, constituting the American division of the great movement party of the world. In coöperating with this party, I am sure that I am a fellow-laborer with the friends of Humanity, who, in France, Germany, Italy, England, are seeking to work out a greater good for the human race. We are all soldiers in the same grand army of progress, and may feel that we are a mighty host, and shall, whatever enemies we may have to encounter, ultimately gain a complete and decisive victory. But, if I enrol myself in the ranks of this party, it is not as a slave, but as a freeman. In proclaiming great principles, in discussing measures, in determining what ought to be done, I speak from my own heart and mind, as God gives me utterance.

I say I do not regard the democratic party as perfect. I see much to be done which it has not yet attempted. I own, I am not satisfied with the inequality in wealth, intelligence, and social position, which I see even in this land of equal rights. We are far

from having realized what I regard as true democratic equality. I struggle for a greater degree of equality, and I believe that it will one day be obtained. I look forward to a time when every man "shall sit under his own vine and fig tree, with none to molest or make afraid;" when the relations of master and slave, and of proprietor and workman, or employer and employed, shall be unknown; when, instead of one man's working for another and receiving wages therefor, all men will be independent proprietors, working on their own capitals, on their own farms, or in their own shops. I am aware that this will seem to my wise countrymen a Utopian dream, and that not a few will look upon me for indulging such a dream as insane, and fit only for a madhouse, or as a rabid agrarian, against whom every man of substance should set his face. But all this moves me not. I think I see the tendency of modern civilization, and I think I am as able as my neighbors, who have hardly given a moment's serious thought to the subject, to judge of the practicability of my dream. As for rabid agrarianism, I pray my wise friends not to be too fast. Perhaps I may love my race as well as they, and feel as strong a desire as they for peace and good order. How do they know that I delight in strife? and how do they know that I do not see as clearly as they, that an arbitrary division of property is a scheme not to be countenanced? Nay, how know they that I have not examined all the schemes, which reformers have prepared for reorganizing society, as thoroughly as they have, and that I also reject them? Wait a moment, good people; you shall not be hurt. Be so indulgent as to bear in mind that I have only said, that I desire a certain order of things, and that I believe that it will one day be brought about; but when, or by what means, I have not said. For aught you know, I hold myself to be entirely ignorant of the means by which that order of things is to be introduced. I have brought forward no scheme for introducing it, and how know you that I have any scheme?

But you tell me such an order of things cannot be introduced. How know you that? Are you prophets? Then give me the proofs of your title to the prophetic character. Perhaps, if it come to prophesying, my commission to prophesy may be as good as yours. At any rate, admit it to be possible, that I may have a little common sense, as well as you a great deal. But if it can be brought about, you say, by what means? This is a question, and one which I cannot answer. I have no scheme of my own, and I pretend not to devise one. I have no plan of a world-reform for you to adopt, for I have not yet found one that I could adopt for myself. I have paid some attention to the schemes of world-reformers, from Plato down to Robert Owen and M. Fourier, but none of them seem to me of any great value. There is not one of them that I cannot easily convict of inadequacy to the end for which it is proposed.

If then I have no scheme for introducing this new and desirable order of things, you may ask me, why I broach the subject? Simply because it is very well when one starts on a voyage, that he should know the port he would make. If he knows not this, how shall he know what course to steer, or be able to determine whether he is sailing in a right direction or a wrong one? If we know not the end we would gain, how can we determine what should be the policy of government, whether this or that measure be good or bad? Say, for instance, we have a large amount of unoccupied lands. The question comes up, how shall we dispose of them? If the end to be sought is to make every man a proprietor, and a laborer on his own capital, then the answer is plain, that they should be disposed of in small parcels, and only to actual settlers, who will themselves perform the labor of cultivating them. And as it is desirable to have as many of these independent proprietors as possible, it follows that the lands should be disposed of at a low price; so that as many men as possible, of small means, may be induced to emigrate and purchase

them farms. Say the question concerning our factory system, as a permanent system, comes up. Ought government to encourage this system, and seek to fasten it on the country forever? What is the tendency of this system? To diminish the number of proprietors, and to increase the number of operatives at wages. Then it is hostile to the order of things we should seek to introduce. Then it ought not to be encouraged. This says nothing against manufactures; it merely condemns the present system, and teaches us that we should labor to make the operatives the owners of the factory. We may see from these two instances the necessity of clearly understanding the end we would gain; and therefore the propriety of discussing the question, What is the order of society we should labor to build up?

As to the method of bringing about the order of society I contemplate, I suppose I am not much wiser than other folks. Society is nothing but the reflex of human nature. You can have nothing in human society which is not in humanity. Humanity in all its integrity is in every individual. In every society then, however imperfect may be its actual state, you have all the elements of the most perfect state to which the human race can aspire. But these elements are imperfectly developed, or improperly compounded. This is the cause of the evils which exist. Your resort for a remedy is, therefore, to mind. You must examine society as it is, and see wherein it is defective; analyze human nature, ascertain its elements, and from these infer the perfection to which you may aspire. Some elements now are developed, and others are not; some elements are dominant which should be subservient, and *vice versa*. You must study to mould your institutions, so as gradually to develop what is undeveloped, and to bring up the elements of human nature, which are now in obscurity, and reduce to servitude others which have now improperly the mastery. This is to be done by means of education, the pulpit, the press, the lyceum, and

the legislature. You cannot create the order of things proposed, nor introduce it at once; you must develop it, and grow into it as best you can. Here is my agrarianism, my recklessness. If any are alarmed at it, why, God help them; I cannot.

Of literature proper, I have not much to say. I place no value on literature for its own sake, and never make it an end to be sought. It deserves our attention only as a means of individual or social growth. The literary aim of this journal will be to breathe into our literature a free and elevated spirit, and to give it a democratic cast, a truly American direction. I would enlist literature on the side of the people, and secure all its influence to the cause of democracy.

In conducting this Review, I wish it to be understood that its contributors are under no obligation to conform to my sentiments and opinions. I have my own doctrines; those I shall always bring out and insist upon; for those, I shall hold myself responsible. But the Review is intended for all who sympathize with the movement party, for all who wish to see progress effected in politics, philosophy, literature, or religion. I am myself an eclectic, and I seek to carry the spirit of eclecticism into all the departments of life and thought; but the Transcendentalists, the Mystics, the Theosophists, the Idealists, may make this journal at all times, if they choose, their medium of communication with the public, as freely as if the editor was one of their own number.

As I open the Review to persons entertaining views which differ from my own, and, as I am not willing to be thought to advocate contradictory doctrines, my own articles will always bear my signature. For these articles the public may hold me responsible, but for none others. Contributors may annex their own names or not to their contributions, at their own option. I shall always exercise the editorial right to say what articles may or may not be inserted; but

pledge myself always to insert, as I have space, all articles sent me, whatever the peculiar doctrines they advocate, when they possess the requisite literary merit, and discuss topics, which, in my judgment, are worth examining. The fact, that any given paper from a contributor is inserted, must never be regarded as a proof that the editor approves its doctrines. It is merely a proof that he thinks it presents an aspect of a great subject which it is well to contemplate. The doctrines of the Review will, of course, be those of its editor. These, he trusts, will secure to it the requisite degree of unity and consistency. My wish is, so far as my limits admit, to afford an opportunity to every one who has a word to utter, of uttering it freely. With these remarks, I send the Review forth again, to find such reception as the public shall see proper to give it.

EDITOR.

ART. II. — *Conversations with Goethe, in the last years of his Life.* Translated from the German of Eckermann. By S. M. FULLER. Boston. 1839.

THIS volume has added another valuable link to the extensive, yet fragmentary chain of memorials which the public already possess in relation to Goethe, and one which may perhaps assist us toward the better interpretation of a character which is, as yet, more talked of than understood among us. Yet, the number of works on the subject, which have been published since his death, would seem to furnish ample materials for the construction of a clue to guide us through all its intricacies. Writers are every day coming forward to present us with the result of their researches in this rich field of investigation. Some few have returned with information, that it is but a dry

and parched land, in which there is no water. Others, again, have found there everflowing, exhaustless springs, at which they have drunken freely, and felt their spirits quickened and refreshed. There has been much sincere, heartfelt eulogium, much decided, unmitigated condemnation. Mr. Dwight, in his notes to the songs and lyrics of Goethe, has proved himself so eloquent an interpreter of the Oracle, that we cannot but regret he had not written more fully on the subject. In Miss Fuller's preface to this volume, there is much just and comprehensive thought expressed in few words. Here is neither affected humility, nor arrogant dictation. She tells us distinctly and simply, what Goethe has been to her own mind, and she does this with so much calmness and candor — she discovers so fine an insight into his modes of thinking, so true a sympathy with his character and genius, that we look forward with increased interest to the more complete delineation of them which we have been led to expect from her.

It is interesting to compare these several transcripts of the same individual, represented under such different lights, and from such various points of observation. From the volume which Miss Fuller has so admirably translated, we derive much information respecting Goethe, which could have been obtained in no other way. Eckermann here portrays him to us in a new attitude, and under new relations. From the true and pure heart of this young disciple, we may behold his mighty spirit reflected, like some high and remote star, seen as mirrored in the calm and transparent bosom of a placid lake. Yet we should not neglect to make due allowance for the refraction which the rays of light must necessarily undergo in their transmission through even so pure a medium.

We have been warned against trusting to the verisimilitude of this delineation of Goethe's mind, on the ground of its having been drawn by the hand of one who loved him, and have been told that we must maintain towards the individual, whom we would fully

understand and appreciate, an entire neutrality of feeling,—a maxim in which we have little faith. We believe, on the contrary, that no character reveals itself to us in all its completeness and beauty, until it is viewed by the full, clear, and mellow light of love; that no mirror reflects so faithfully, as the loving heart. Not only do a thousand delicate, evanescent shades of character, a thousand latent traits of goodness and beauty reveal themselves to the keenly apprehensive, and ever watchful eye of love, which would have escaped an indifferent observer; but is it not also true, in another and far higher sense, that love is the true interpreter of Humanity? May we not venture to hope that those qualities in the character of an individual, which excite our love and veneration, are indeed its inherent and essential elements, while the faults and blemishes, which seem so prominent to cavillers and critics, are but its accidental and adventitious accessories, depending on the circumstances and influences of the moment. There is a passage in Mr. Emerson's address to the Divinity Students of Cambridge, which has more than once been pointed out to us, as one to which it is difficult, if not impossible, to attach any definite meaning, but which to us seems radiant with a divine significance. The passage is simply this,—“Good is positive, evil only privative, not absolute.” Do not these words express a profound truth? Nay, do they not even furnish an adequate solution of the one great problem, the existence and origin of evil,—since they teach that evil is but imperfection, the absence and negation of good, (in a greater or less degree the necessary condition of all created beings,) even as in the natural world cold is the absence of heat, and darkness of light? What should we think of a naturalist, who, instead of seeking to observe the phenomena, and analyze the elements of light and heat, should turn all his attention to the study and contemplation of their opposites? Carlyle says, “of even unwise admiration, much may be hoped, for much good is really

in it; but unwise contempt is itself a negation. Nothing can come of it, for it *is* nothing."

We will not, then, refuse to learn what we can of a great man, because it comes to us, as in the present instance, through the mediation of a devoted disciple, but thankfully receive what, with so much simplicity and good faith, Eckermann has here confided to us.

To trace the progress of a life like Goethe's, through all the bright stages of its culmination and decline, from the rich but misty light of its dawn, to the calm, serene, golden glories of its setting, would be a study of profound interest to every thoughtful observer. The life of a man of genius is ever a life of conflict; ever is it exposed to trials and temptations, of which obtuser and calmer natures do not even dream. Montaigne says truly of the dangerous gift of genius, that "it is a sharp sword, which, if its possessor knows not how to arm himself with it discreetly and soberly, will pierce him to the heart." The man of "time-serving mediocrity," moulded and manufactured after safe conventional rules and formulas, treads the broad high-ways, and beaten paths of life, with a mechanical, unquestioning conformity, looking neither to the right nor the left, neither before nor after, and asking only, "what shall he eat, what shall he drink, and where-withal shall he be clothed." Occupied with the immediate and the palpable, he heeds not the sad changes, the fearful contrasts, and all the mysterious, contradictory phenomena of human life. He feels no heart-sickening discrepancy between the wants of the spirit, and the actual condition of the external world. No bright vision of beauty and love exists within his own mind, to pale the splendor of the outward, and make him dissatisfied with reality. He knows nothing of those weary struggles, by which energetic and sensitive spirits exhaust themselves in a ceaseless conflict with the actual.

The Promethean ardor of genius, chained to the hard and sterile rock of reality, feels itself preyed upon by the vulture of unsatisfied desires, which pant

after the ideal. Byron, Burns, Cowper, Shelley, Tasso, and Rousseau,—what a succession of shining beacons are here, to warn the beholder of those peculiar dangers to which minds, thus highly gifted and finely organized, are exposed! Too often, while sitting at the feast of life, like the stranger guest at the Egyptian banquet, their eyes are turned sadly upon the veiled memorial of mortality, where, from beneath its embroidered pall, the hollow visage of death seems to mock them with its ghastly and spectral gaze. Too often neglectful of the cheering intercourse, and all the kindly, familiar charities of social life, they stand solitary and apart in a wild and visionary world, brooding in misanthropic gloom over the perplexing mysteries of life, questioning the past and the future, and sending forth their proud thoughts to “wander through eternity.” We turn away with a sigh from the story of their lives, and are almost tempted to believe that there is some fatal and necessary connexion between genius, error, and suffering.

When we see the noble and the gifted, who went forth in the morning of life with loving hearts, and eager, expectant spirits, in search of knowledge and happiness, returning ere midday from their fruitless quest, with energies prematurely wasted, with blanched cheek and blighted hope; sick at heart and sullied, perhaps, in fame; then a deep oppression seizes us; we no longer trust ourselves to think; we would fain cease to feel; but nature, kind and friendly nature, will not leave us to nourish our sick fancies. She wins us out of these dark moods, for the most part, whether we will or not. And she does this most successfully, she most effectually cheers and strengthens us, by showing us examples of great men, who have borne unblenching the heat and burden of the day; men who have passed from hope to faith through the fiery trial of doubt. And even such an one to us is Goethe.

The history of a mind thus highly dowered,—of a soul penetrated with the bright ideal of goodness

and truth—keenly sensitive to praise and blame—to pain and pleasure, to beauty and deformity. Alive to all the manifold and conflicting influences of the outward world, yet gathering strength and power from all—profiting alike by its failures and successes, and at last rising superior to evil through the force of an energetic will and a sincere integrity of soul. Such a delineation, affording materials for the solution of the highest psychological problems, and presenting a theme of all others the most fruitful in interest and instruction, is presented us in that long and ever active life, to whose serene close Eckermann has here so devoutly conducted us.

And what a glorious privilege is this which he has accorded us! To commune with this great man in the privacy and quiet of his own home,—to mark the tranquil routine of his daily life,—to sit beside him in friendly converse,—to walk with him up and down the hushed and secluded apartments, hearkening to his rich, unpremeditated discourse, and receiving from him wise counsel and friendly caution. All this is to us a source of unwonted pleasure.

In the fine mornings of Spring, we may walk out with him through his grounds and gardens,—listen with him to the earliest notes of the blackbird and the thrush,—watch the opening beaks of the hyacinth, and welcome the palmy glories of the crown imperial. Sometimes, we find him still there in the dusk of evening, sitting with his little grandson beside him, beneath the lindens which were planted by his own hand forty years before. If he has been reading, he lays down the volume to impart to us some of the wealth of his full mind. We may ride out with him in the bright afternoons, when the orchards are white with blossoms and the birches in full leaf. Then may we see how closely he observes all the varying aspects of nature, all beautiful effects of light and shade, all rich hues and waving outlines; and learn in what school it was, and under whose teaching, that he acquired his fine appreciation of art. On our return we

see him gazing thoughtfully at the setting sun ; but he turns cheerfully and says, " At the age of seventy-five, one must often think on death, but the thought causes me no uneasiness, I am so fully convinced that the soul is indestructible and that its activity will continue through eternity. It is like the sun which seems to our earthly eyes to set in night, but is in reality gone to diffuse its light elsewhere." Sometimes we visit him at his country-house, which commands a view of rich meadows with the Sale meandering through the valley. On the east are wooded hills, where we may watch the retreating showers or behold the rising sun. In this beautiful retreat Goethe tells us, that he enjoys day and night equally. " Often," says he, " I awake before dawn and lie down by the open windows to enjoy the splendor of the three planets, which are at present to be seen together, and the gradual irradiation of the clouds. I pass almost the whole day in the open air, and hold spiritual communion with the tendrils of the vine, which say many good things to me, and of which I could tell you wonders."

In Weimar we meet at his house celebrated men, and listen to his conversation with them ; though in such assemblies, he loves best to be a listener. With him we look at pictures and engravings from the best Italian and Flemish masters. We hear him speak of great writers of the past and present time,—of Voltaire and Molière,—of Cousin and Guizot,—of De la Vigne and Béranger,—of Manzoni, Byron and Scott, and of all with a noble, sincere enthusiasm which might put to the blush the lukewarm, reluctant commendation of self-mindful, cautious critics, who would fain manifest their penetration by discovering nothing but faults. Yet this is the man of whom Heine has somewhere said, that his approbation is a " brevet of mediocrity." The true key to this is, not that Goethe was in any way insensible to the merits of writers of established reputation, but that, his mind being open to every manifestation of excellence, he frequently discovered much good in the writings of young and obscure au-

thors, whose laurels were yet unreaped, which men, more fearful of risking their own reputation by premature praise, would not have ventured to notice.

Everywhere in this book, do we see indications of Goethe's self-relying, self-sufficing spirit, which unfolded itself tranquilly without a reference to the opinions and prejudices of the world. Thus, when Eckermann says, "if Faust could be represented as you have designed it, the public would sit astonished and would not know how to comprehend it;" he replies, "Go, — leave your public, of which I would not willingly hear anything. The only thing for me is to write it, — let the public receive it as it may, and use it as far as it can." Goethe had not a particle of restless vanity, nor any petty pride in his works. He considered everything that he had done as a means rather than an end. He was ever striving forward, and when he had completed a work, he laid it aside and thought of it no more.

We also find here many evidences of that which we most admire and reverence in him, — his entire and genuine honesty of spirit, — his fearless confidence in truth and nature. Falk says of him, "I might almost affirm, that a faulty and vigorous character, if it had any native qualities as its basis, was regarded by him with more indulgence and respect, than one which at no moment of its existence is genuine, — which is incessantly under restraint. "Oh," said Goethe, "sighing, if these people had but the heart to commit some indiscretion, there would be hope of them, — they would at least be restored to their own natural soil, free from all hypocrisy and acting; and wherever that is the case one may entertain the hope, that something will spring from the germ of good which nature has implanted in every individual; but on the ground they are now upon nothing can grow."

His clear and penetrating intellect, — his abhorrence of all hollow shows and solemn mockeries, — his determined opposition to everything false and factitious, led him to eschew those officious *soi disant*

friends of religion, who pride themselves on their superior sanctity in opposing all the genial impulses of nature ; nay, who start and recoil at the very word, as if it were some strange cabalistic sound, pregnant with monstrous heresy.

At this folly, he has, in the second part of *Faust*, aimed one of those sharp and sure arrows which always go straight to the mark ; a sapient cardinal says, in reply to Mephistopheles, who asks, " what may not be done by one gifted with man's nature and spiritual energies,"

"Natur und Geist, — so spricht man nicht zu Christen.
Dehalb verbrennt man Atheisten,
Weil solche Reden höchst gefährlich sind.
Natur ist Sünde, Geist ist Teufel ;
Sic hegen zwischen sich den zweifel." &c. — p. 15.

"Nature and Spirit !
Why these are words to make a Christian quake, —
For such have atheists perished at the stake.
Such words are perilous, — full fraught with evil,
Nature is Sin, and Spirit is the Devil,
And between both they nurse the monster doubt." &c.

Goethe's faith was manifested by a mild pervading spirit of goodness, — a benignant charity, — a genial, steadfast trust. Eckermann was one day interested by the parental love of a hedge-sparrow, which could in no way be induced to forsake its young. Such affection, he says, superior to danger and imprisonment moved me deeply, and I expressed my admiration to Goethe. "Simple man," he replied, with a smile, "if you believed in God you would not wonder. If God did not inspire the bird with this all-powerful love for its young, and did not similar influences pervade all animate nature, the world could not subsist. Even so is the divine energy everywhere diffused, and the divine love everywhere active." Goethe's opponents are constantly talking of his Pantheism ; but if this be Pantheism, it seems in no way inferior to our orthodoxy. Eckermann says, "Goethe has been accused of having no faith, simply because the common faith was

too narrow for him." And after all, what confession of faith can equal that of a life at once thoughtful and serene ?

This book is invaluable to us for adding confirmation to our faith in the integrity of Goethe's character. Dark hints have been thrown out from time to time, as if all was not as it should be in his life. Yet we hear of no definite charges. Heine, who was once most bitter against him, has publicly avowed since his death, that his opposition sprung from envy. Yet Heine never attacked him as an author, but only as a *man*. Some writers, sincere friends of Goethe too, tell us " that with this we have nothing to do, that we should look at him and all other authors merely as artists, and enjoy their works apart from any feelings of partiality or dislike to them as individuals." But this we cannot consent to do. We seek in a work of genius first of all to acquaint ourselves with the mind of its author, — to understand and enter into his character. Above all, is the knowledge we have acquired of Goethe's mind most precious to us. We would sooner part with all his works, could we attain an adequate knowledge of his character through any other medium, than to lose that higher satisfaction which we derive from the consciousness that such a man has lived ; and we joy to find, notwithstanding all which has been said of him as a " mere artist," that in these conversations, he repeatedly speaks of the want of character in a writer, as one which can be supplied by no mechanical skill ; that for an author to write nobly he must first *be* noble, and above all does he insist upon the indispensable element of love.

Goethe was a great man and a true. Yet his was not a character that he who runs may read, — not every superficial observer and cold formalist can enter into the springs of such a mind ; or understand how its complex and diverse elements blend and assimilate into a consistent and harmonious whole. The symmetrical unity, the classic, statue-like repose that characterized him, have been denounced by many as the

dication of a cold, selfish, apathetic nature. To form a candid estimate of these later manifestations, we must go back to the earliest characteristic developments of his mind, as they are exhibited in his *Dichtung und Wahrheit*. We may there observe its nature and inherent traits, and ascertain in what manner they were modified and tempered by the circumstances and discipline of life. We may look quite through the crystal transparency of his young, unshrouded spirit, and watch the gradual expansion of all those noble elements, which were afterwards matured and expanded under judicious culture into full and rare perfection. The striking contrast, which the earlier characteristics of his mind present to those exhibited toward its close, is an interesting and important feature in his history. In his youth, Goethe seemed possessed as it were by his Genius, — in after life, it might be said of him most emphatically that he possessed and ruled it. In youth he exhibited all the passionate fervor and morbid sensibility, the impetuous energies and strong volitions peculiar to the poetic temperament. He seemed ruled by a spirit mightier than himself, and uttered oracles of whose high import he was himself unconscious; but in his maturity he had acquired a calm supremacy, a serene, self-possessed control over the plastic powers and obedient energies of his mighty intellect. Over all the subject faculties of his mind, his will seemed to preside as a sovereign.

To our thinking, never was criticism more false than that which a writer in the Edinburgh Review pronounced, when he said of Goethe, that "his mind wandered without distinct aim or object, given to quarrel with all those who possessed a firmer faith or a more practical will than himself." On the contrary, notwithstanding the objective character of his later writings, his mind was eminently and intently self-conscious. He thoroughly knew and understood himself. He had ranged over a wide field of mental action and passion, he had had extensive experience of

life under its various forms of being, doing, and suffering, and he made a wise and enlightened use of that experience. He profoundly analyzed and justly estimated the capacities of his nature; he chose his path deliberately, and went rejoicing on his way.

That the man who had written Werther and Faust, which, as he acknowledges, are for the most part confessions of his own moods of mind and habits of thought, should have been able manfully to struggle through those darker periods of conflict and doubt, and to win for himself a tranquil and serene region, where he possessed his soul in peace, and wrought diligently in the career of science, literature, and art, which he had marked out for himself,—this surely was no trivial achievement, no unworthy example. The powers of his mind recovered from their morbid excitability, and now in full and healthy action, expanded so freely and matured so rapidly, that Schiller, himself no laggard in this glorious pathway, found himself, according to his own confession, “completely distanced in the course.” An expression, however, which Goethe has reciprocated in the following noble testimony to the genius of his friend. “If,” said he, “I was a week without seeing Schiller, when we met I was astonished and knew not where to lay hold of him, I found him so much further advanced.” This mutual tribute of these great minds affords the strongest evidence of their intellectual excellence. Yet amidst all the healthy activity and calm serenity of his maturity, Goethe’s imagination was still excitable, and his feelings sensitive to a degree seldom witnessed, except in the first freshness and bloom of existence. We have a singular proof of this, in the intensity of his impressions with regard to Italy. His desire to behold the land, where “through dark bowers the golden orange glows,” amounted to a passion, insomuch, that for many years he dared not look into any Latin writer, or contemplate anything which renewed the idea of Italy in his mind. Herder, he says, used to taunt him with learning all his Latin out of Spinoza, for he

had observed, that this was the only Latin book that he studied. "He did not know," continues Goethe, "how sedulously I was obliged to guard myself from the ancients, — how I sought a refuge from the very fever of my spirits in these abstruse generalities." This is a characteristic trait, and speaks volumes in refutation of his indifference. It shows, that his calm serenity of spirit, far from being the result of constitutional coldness, or acquired, time-taught apathy, was the fruit of that noble self-restraint which he so sedulously cultivated. Instead of sinking, like less energetic natures, under the trials and disappointments that crossed his path, or turning aside from them to seek relief in exhausting factitious excitements, he only applied at such periods with increased assiduity to the noblest exercises of the intellect. Whenever he had suffered from excess of emotion, he sought to still the fever of the passions by intense and persevering application, taking refuge from the haunting recollections and corroding cares of life, in the investigation of the abstract principles of science, or exercising his powers in some rare creation of art. His genius was a gem that paled not, like the opal, when sorrow and danger threatened its possessor, but flashed forth at such moments an intenser and keener radiance.

We hear much of Goethe's indifference to the great political interests and exciting public movements of his time. While he has been denounced as heartless and selfish, if not soulless and sensual, for not more actively forwarding the various philanthropic efforts for the amelioration of social wrong; but to us it seems not unworthy of commendation, in an age when all are seeking to teach, to guide, and to elevate their fellows, that one among the many should manifest through the contented activity, the calm serenity, and mild practical wisdom of his life, that he had at least acquired something worthy of being imparted. We would refer those, who condemn him for his political neutrality, to his own beautiful defence of the course

he had adopted, given by him in his conversations with Eckermann.

"If a poet would work politically," says he, "he must give himself up to a party, and so soon as he does that, he is lost as a poet; he must bid farewell to his freedom of spirit, and draw over his ears the cap of bigotry and blind hatred. The poet may as a man and a citizen love his native land, but the native land of his poetic energies and poetic action is the good, noble, and beautiful, which is confined to no province nor country; which he is to seize upon and body forth wherever he finds it. And what then is meant by love of one's country? What is meant by patriotic deeds? If the poet has employed a life in battling with pernicious prejudices in setting aside narrow views, in enlightening the intellects, purifying the tastes, ennobling the feeling and thoughts of his countrymen, what better could he have done, how shown himself more truly a patriot?" "Also," Eckermann tell us, "he blamed the political course, so much praised by others, of Uhland." "Watch well," said he, "and you will see the politician devour the poet. To be a member of the estates, and live among perpetual jostlings and excitements, is not the life for a poet. His song will soon cease. Swabia has plenty of men sufficiently well educated, well meaning, able and fluent of tongue, to be members of the estates; but only one poet of Uhland's class."

Goethe, moreover, believed with Dr. Johnson, that our happiness is comparatively but little influenced by the form of government under which we live. It was his conviction, that far less could be done for a man from *without* than from *within*. There is an expression to this effect in the *Helena*.

Lass der Sonne Glanz verschwinden,
Wenn es in der Seele tagt,
Wer in eignen Herzen finden
Was die ganze welt versagt. — p. 223.

Let the Sun's light fade away,
If within the soul 't is day, —
The heart's deep fountain shall supply,
What all the world doth still deny.

But why should we ask of the poet, that he should
VOL. III. NO. 1.

be also a politician, that he should mingle in the stormy and conflicting interests of public life, thereby to endanger perhaps the universality of his sympathies and the comprehensiveness of his vision? Should we not rather look upon him as the great high priest of Humanity, — as one of a consecrated race, set apart to minister to the wants of the spirit, — to illustrate the eternal laws of Beauty, — to feed with the pure naphtha of genius that divine flame of enthusiasm, which burns with more or less intensity in every bosom, that love of the ideal and the spiritual, which warms and elevates at times even the coldest and dullest heart? The poet should be for us the interpreter of the dream of life, — he should reveal to us the secret treasures that lie within the depths of our own spirits, — he should show us all the beauty, the harmony, and the glory of existence, — he should be for us, at once, the expounder of the past, the prophet of the future, the idealizer of the present.

Novalis says finely, “that the greater part of our humanity yet sleeps a deep sleep.” Thus it seems to us, in some natures do those faculties, which belong to the ideal, still seem buried in a profound slumber. This portion of our being it is which the poet divines for us, — he reveals to us a foretaste of those higher instincts, which are hereafter to be more fully developed within us. When the ideal is born within us, then do we wake to a new existence, and take possession of a princely heritage, a celestial and imperishable kingdom.

Perhaps no man has ever more nobly conceived, and assuredly none has more eloquently described the poet’s high vocation, than Goethe has done in his *Wilhelm Meister*. Had he written but this one thing, it would amply attest the splendor of his genius. The words seem to trace themselves upon the memory in characters of light. Among other things, he says, “He, who is fashioned like a bird to soar over the world, to nestle upon high cliffs, and to draw his nour-

ishment from the flowers and fruits, exchanging lightly one bough with another; he cannot accustom himself to draw the plough like the steer, or guard the household like the mastiff."

Those persons, who refuse to see anything admirable in Goethe, because to all his own rare and varied excellence he did not also unite the active benevolence of a Howard, with the Christian zeal and political disinterestedness of a Wilberforce, remind us of those insidious advisers, who persuaded Aladdin, that his magnificent palace was incomplete and worthless, without the addition of the Rock's egg, the acquisition of which in some way involved the sacrifice of the whole fabric.

Granting, that his intellect was more active than his feelings, and that it thoroughly controlled and guided them, shall we therefore refuse to accord him aught of our sympathy and admiration? Feelings of greater impulsiveness and impetuosity, might probably have been associated with an intellect less comprehensive and discriminating, — more social and patriotic activity, with an inferior degree of artistic culture and a less catholic spirit. Let us take great men as we find them, as God and nature have moulded, as circumstances and their own efforts have modified them, and be thankful for the good, without dwelling captiously upon the evil. It is idle for men to attempt to say what Goethe would have been, if certain qualities had been abstracted from, and certain other qualities added to his nature. As it is, we find positive excellence of a high and rare order. Would it not be wiser to study this with a spirit of genial sympathy, than painfully to hunt after defects? A mind like his, apprehensive of all beauty, and ever watchful after truth, never slumbering, never tiring in its pursuit, cannot but have left treasures for those who will receive them, and a glorious example for all who will observe and profit by it.

This volume of *Conversations* will be cordially welcomed by some, if only for the light which it throws

upon the enigmatical conclusion of Faust. Not a few of the many problems, contained in that strange phantasmagoria, are solved by Goethe in the various incidental allusions to it, thrown out in conversation while the work was in progress. The commencement of this wild poem was written at that stage of mental transition, when we are first rudely waked from the dreams of the imagination to all the sterner realities of life,—when Hope has thrown aside her radiant pencil, and no longer paints on the dark curtain, that conceals from us the future, her bright enchanting story. When we look around despairingly on a world that seems destitute of interest, harmony, or design, and begin to ask ourselves those strange and agitating questions, which, when they have once suggested themselves to the understanding, cannot be silenced by any wisdom which is of this world. Fontenelle tells us, that “when we discover the utter vanity and worthlessness of all that occupies and surrounds us in life, we become too wise, we tear from nature the heart of her mystery, and ceasing to act, we do nothing but think.” “While nature,” he says, “revenges herself upon us for thus seeking to penetrate her secrets, by the sadness reflection causes us.” The acute Frenchman with all his wisdom never got beyond this!

Voltaire too, at the very close of his long and brilliant life, writes from Ferney to Madame du Deffand in the same spirit. “Let us wholly resign ourselves to our fate, which only laughs at our endeavors to escape from it. Let us live as long as we can and how we can, we shall never be as happy as fools are; yet let us endeavor to be so in our own way. Death of itself is nothing, but thinking of it makes us melancholy. Let us therefore banish it from our minds, and live from hand to mouth. Let us say, when we rise, ‘what shall I do to-day for the benefit of my health and for my amusement?’ That is all we ought to think of at our age. Life is a baby which must be rocked till it falls asleep.” And again, “All our tri-

fling consolations are only so many plasters applied to that *wound* our existence." Alas! for the sage of Ferney, with his rocking-cradle and his plasters!

This stage our German had now reached, but it was one in which no true German could rest, least of all Goethe. He felt its desolation too keenly to abide in it,—he could not pitch his tent there,—he knows that he must get beyond that barren wilderness, or perish in it. But let us hear how he describes this weary period of his "apprenticeship."

"In the popular drama of which Faust is the hero, I found more than one tone which vibrated through my soul. I also had passed through the circle of the sciences, and had early convinced myself of their vanity. All my endeavors to find felicity in life had hitherto proved fruitless. I shared to excess in that restlessness of spirits, that leads the contemplative man to dwell on internal disquietudes, which have but a transitory existence in unreflecting minds. I was already acquainted with the miseries of social life, — my adventure with Margaret, and the consequences of that connexion, had opened my eyes to the strange irregularities that are to be found in the bosom of civil society, where the polished smoothness of the surface is strangely contrasted by the internal convulsions, caused by passions whose influence is more fatal, in consequence of those restraints which oppose their outward development. When we consider the effect produced by these internal conflicts on an ardent temperament, — when we reflect on the seductions of the imagination and the continual agitation of life, we cannot wonder at the impatience, which man often evinces, to free himself from the burden of existence. There are also many individuals, who, unable to find an object on which to exercise their activity, and led astray by extravagant desires, become disgusted with an existence which to them seems too monotonous and peaceful. Such was at one time the peculiar disposition of my own mind, and I well remember how much pain I suffered, and how many efforts I made to effect a cure."

Thus has he eloquently described that state of feeling, to which all susceptible natures are necessarily exposed, at a certain period of their progress. With that prompt and keen apprehensiveness of excellence, which belonged to his nature, Goethe at once seized

upon what was still vital and genuine in this old legend of Faust, the growth of an ignorant and superstitious age; and concentrating upon it the light of his genius, the simple germ expanded and unfolded into a plant of rare and surpassing beauty, putting forth leaf after leaf, and producing gradually the fairest flowers and the richest fruits,—its roots striking far down into the earth, and its branches waving freely in the blue depths of ether. Its seeds have been wafted abroad over far lands, and have sprung up again in power and beauty from many a foreign soil. Byron's Manfred, perhaps the chef-d'œuvre of his genius, is evidently a scion of this noble plant. Coleridge gives manifold proofs of having been quickened and stimulated by its influence, and Mrs. Hemans has not hesitated to pluck now and then a fair flower from its branches. We remember few things more perfect of their kind than her Spirit's Return. Yet one of its finest touches seems to us a beautiful, though perhaps unconscious appropriation of an expression in Goethe's Helena. In her wonderful and awe-inspiring description of a being, recalled by the passionate adjuration of love from the spirit land, Mrs. Hemans says,

"Before me there
He, the departed stood! Oh, for strong words
To bring conviction o'er thy thought,—
Aye, face to face, *so near*,—yet *O how far!*"

The words in italics are precisely the same which Goethe has put into the mouth of Helena, who when invoked from the lands of departed spirits, says to Faust, with a perplexed half-consciousness of her newly awakened existence, "*Ich fühle mich so fern, und doch so nah.*" We might instance other examples, for they occur very frequently in the latter poems. Goethe justifies this "culling of sweets," and commends Lord Byron for the sagacity which he evinced in discovering and adopting the best thoughts of the best writers. For ourselves, we would rather see the flowers growing on their native stem, unless indeed they are fairly incorporated and engrafted into the for-

eign plant and not merely fastened upon it as ornaments.

Fifty years had elapsed after the publication of this first part of *Faust*, before the second was fully completed and given to the world. In this long interval, great and important changes had taken place in the mind of its author. He was no longer a lonely exile on earth, — he had reconciled himself to existence, and brought his finely tempered spirit into perfect harmony with itself and the external world. In *Experience* he had found a rude, yet not unfriendly teacher, in *Nature* the gentlest mother and the kindest nurse, and within his own heart a tranquil, happy home. He no longer shared in that satiety of spirit that wrung from *Israel's* luxurious monarch the despairing anathema on life, which the world-weary heart of humanity has echoed for so many thousand years, — “All is vanity!” But while he too sorrowed and suffered and felt at times the weariness of existence, he knew and felt in his inmost heart, that that sorrow and that weariness would in some way become the ministers of good. In his mouth the fruit of the tree of knowledge, far from turning to “bitterness and ashes,” yielded a bland and sweet nourishment, maturing and strengthening all the powers of his soul. He had too now learned that great truth, the discovery of which forms so important an era in the life of every thinking man, that

“We receive but what we give,
In our life alone doth nature live.”

He appears to have attained that conviction, so contradictory to the simple suggestions of the understanding, that, even as in the natural world the diurnal changes from light to darkness are produced by our globe's revolving on its own axis, so also is it in the spiritual. That not the revolution of any foreign object, any external source of light and heat, makes the soul's night and day, — its morning and evening ; but

while external things remain comparatively unchanged in their relations to us, it is but the rotations and transitions of our own spirits that causes our sun to rise and set,—that creates for us the serene radiance of the dawn, or involves us in the gloom and darkness of midnight.

On these great truths his mind was nourished, and from them it acquired freedom, serenity, and power. The eye of his understanding became keener, the wing of his imagination bolder. His writings had now entirely lost their subjective character. His high artistic culture, his practised eye, and above all his confirmed faith, that the divine spirit reveals itself equally in every manifestation of being,—had won him from that exclusive contemplation of his own spirit, which marked some of his earlier writings, into a wider range of observation, and prepared him for a more varied delineation of life.

The change, of which we speak, is vividly indicated in two engraved heads of Goethe, which are now lying before us. The one a beautiful outline in profile, taken we should suppose from a bust, and accompanying the London edition of the Correspondence with Bettina Brentano. The other a fine engraving by Weber prefixed to a copy of Faust.

How eloquent are they both, yet how different is the language they utter. The former, representing him in his youth, seems the very incarnation and embodiment of poetic thought. The attitude of the head is one of exceeding beauty, and in itself full of character, so lofty is it, so expressive of the triumphant consciousness of power, so graceful, fearless, and free. The far-glancing eye looks neither to heaven nor earth, but forward into a purely ideal region, while it seems to dilate and kindle as with the thought of its proud inheritance. The countenance expresses a mingled sweetness and fervor, gentleness and pride; and though a shade of sadness lingers around the rich curvature of the lip, in the whole we see tokens of a spirit, for which life has yet many stern lessons in store,

many heavy, weary hours. This picture reminds us of a young race-horse eager to run his course, "standing with flowing mane, arching neck, and dilated nostrils, ready to leap all barriers and dash aside all obstacles that threaten to impede his progress." It recalls to us, also, the description which Jacobi gives of him in 1774. "Goethe was with us," says he in a letter to a friend, "a handsome youth of twenty-five; from the crown of his head to the sole of his foot all genius, power, and strength, — a spirit of fire with the wings of an eagle, 'qui ruit immensus ore profundo.' The more I think of him, the more intensely I feel the impossibility of writing to any one, who has not seen or heard him, anything comprehensible concerning this extraordinary creature of God. It requires to be only an hour in his company to find it in the highest degree preposterous, to desire him to think or act after any other fashion than his own."

But now let us look at the other picture representing him at an advanced period of his existence, even as he might have looked, when Bettina Brentano first saw him, and thought upon what King David said, "each man may be king over himself." Even so, perchance, looks he here as he then looked upon her, with that grave, serene, penetrating glance, whose light never afterwards faded from her young innocent heart. For let us not be deterred from trusting in the reality and purity of such affection as hers, by the doubtful smiles of the infidel worldling, — rare and evanescent as it is, the power of feeling and believing in such love is among those higher instincts, which redeem our nature from the curse of the serpent, condemned to grovel forever upon the earth.

In this picture the calm supremacy of the mature intellect, — the repose of the self-conquered spirit may be seen in the increased expansion of the marble brow, and in the full, serene eye, which seems to look quite through the object of its gaze, insomuch, that at a first glance, it appears to be fixed on vacancy, so far does it penetrate beyond the surface. The beautiful

expression of the mouth which expresses refinement without fastidiousness, — the mild benignant lustre of the eye, — the stedfast majesty of the broad brow, — the tempered, chastened calm that pervades the whole, speak a mind and character to which life had richly ministered.

Let us pause a moment longer, — we are fond of looking at busts and portraits, — to compare this last with a wonderfully expressive head wrought in marble, which stands on yonder cabinet. It might pass for a representation of Mephistophiles, but it is not so, it is the head of a real personage, — a great man, one who has of late been often compared with Goethe, not unfrequently pronounced decidedly his superior. Nay, we have been even assured by a writer in the a contemporary journal, that he had by far the more faith of the two, that he was by no means so rank an infidel, — perhaps a comparison of these heads might assist us in settling the question. Let us look at this last. Here, too, is precision, piercing sharpness, sagacity, shrewdness, discrimination, but no insight. Those eyes cannot even look you directly in the face, — far less can they penetrate beyond the surface into the core and marrow of being. They look on life with an oblique, cynical, side-long glance, — a cold, sneering, distrusting smile, which is full of world-wisdom, it is true; but is this the countenance of a man at peace with the world and with his own heart? If so, it is but a hollow compact, — a treaty in which there is no sure reliance, no stedfast feeling of security. Has he any true joy in the present, — any faith in the unseen and the spiritual? Goethe enjoyed life without fearing death; Voltaire, alas! (for it is his bust that we are contemplating,) was neither happy in life nor resigned to death. The *wound* still throbbed painfully, for there was no healing balm in the specifics that were applied to it. Nor could the vibratory motion of the infant's cradle charm away the fear of spectral dreams. Nevertheless, we trust that he now sleeps in peace; and having satisfactorily decided for our-

selves the question above alluded to, we leave others to determine it at their leisure, and return to our subject of Faust.

We believe that the continuation of this poem is as yet but little known out of Germany. Eckermann tell us, that Goethe relied for its success upon the high point of culture to which his nation had arrived. It does not reflect life in its simplicity,—it is not calculated, like the works of Shakspeare, to please the learned and the unlearned,—the wise and the simple,—it is full of refinements and abstractions,—it deals in symbols and hieroglyphics. We have nothing in English literature, that at all resembles it, or approximates to it. The English critics, who have alluded to it, have for the most part condemned it unread. A writer in the Edinburgh tells us, that it is “a crude and revolting mass of absurdities.” Yet Eckermann says, that Goethe agreed with him in thinking, that a far richer world was here displayed than in the earlier portion. Goethe confessed, that the first part was almost entirely subjective, proceeding from an oppressed, impassioned state of the individual character; while in the second, he says, “there was exhibited a higher, broader, clearer, and more passionless region, of which those, who have not lived and looked about them sometime, will hardly know what to think.”

The slighting and disparaging tone of remark, which has been adopted in relation to it by English critics, reminds us of a passage in this poem, where Mephistophiles is made to say, as if in anticipation of the manner in which it would be treated by this class of writers;

“Daran erkenn’ ich den *Gelehrter herrn* !
Was ihr nicht tastet steht euch meilen fern;
Was ihr nicht fasst, das fehlt euch ganz und gar;
Was ihr nicht rechnet, glaubt ihr sey nicht wahr;
Was ihr nicht wägt, hat für euch kein Gewicht;
Was ihr nicht münzt, das, meint ihr, gelte nicht.

By this, I know what learned men ye are,
What ye can handle not, seems miles afar,

What ye can grasp not, is an empty shade,
What ye divine not, must all search evade,
That which ye have not poised of weight is stinted,
And no coin current, save what ye have minted."

Yet it should not perhaps excite our surprise, that these "Gelehrter herrn," (learned gentlemen,) cannot see, at one glance, all that is comprised in this rare production, the rich results of a life of contemplative observation and poetic insight.

Diderot tells us, "that there are a thousand learned men, (hommes instruits,) for one enlightened man, — a thousand enlightened men, for one man of fine insight and acute penetration, (clair-voyant,) and a thousand clair-voyants for one man of genius." "The man of genius," he says, "creates things, — the clair-voyant deduces principles from them, — the enlightened man makes the application of those principles. The merely learned man is ignorant neither of the things which have been created, nor the laws which have been deduced from them, nor of the application which has been made of those laws, — he knows all, but he produces nothing and comprehends little."

Many commentaries have been written upon this portion of Faust, — many theories invented respecting its object and design. Yet still, to the majority of readers, it remains as much an enigma as ever, — to a large proportion of the Germans even a "stumbling block," and to the English "foolishness." For ourselves, we read the work without an interpreter, and brooded over it in the silence of the spirit, — neither commentary nor analysis had found its way to our remote seclusion, — no friendly reader sympathized with our pleasure and perplexities, — no critic intermeddled with our joys, — we groped our way in the darkness, and often came unawares upon rich treasures, — lumps of pure golden ore, and gems of rare lustre. It is true that, after its first perusal, we retained of it for a time only a confused and dream-like recollection, produced by the constant change of scene and strange blending of objects.

The quaint and merry songs of the masquers were ringing in our ears, blended with the carols of of sea-nymphs, and the silver-sweet chorus of angels and blessed spirits; the wild imagery and grotesque dramatis personæ of the "Classical Walpurgis night," with the severe simplicity and antique contour of the "Helena." All these left at first a confused and disjointed impression on the mind, as of some rich and graceful but fantastic tracery of arabesque, viewed in faint and partially obliterated outline on the frieze of some ancient temple, — but as we continue to gaze, the finely carved tracery becomes fairer, and more sharply defined; centaurs and griffins are now seen at intervals amid the fantastic foliage, — laughing satyrs leer upon us from some vine-wreathed covert, — pensive caryatides are discovered supporting the rich entablature, their symmetrical figures shrouded in flowing drapery, and their thoughtful faces full of high symbolic meaning. What seemed at first but a confused and fragmentary delineation of objects, now unfolds a design of rich and rare significance. By degrees, the several groups assume more of prominence and distinctness, the lights and shades become stronger, — the outline bolder, till at last, they stand forth in all the rounded and finely moulded perfection of Grecian art. The forms, it is true, are marble still, — still wanting in all the life-warm coloring and glowing freshness of nature, and still, as with all figures wrought in relievo, one side of the object only being delineated by the artist, it is left for the imagination of the beholder to supply the rest, and to give the figure its full completeness and finish.

We cannot hope to form a correct and candid estimate of such a work, by comparing it with the writings of other poets. We must not, like the author of an article in a late number of the *Foreign Quarterly*, expect to arrive at a just estimate of Goethe by measuring him with Shakspeare, or think to manifest our fairness by condemning him, because we can find no resemblance between the two. We must endeavor

to forget all our favorite standards of excellence, — all the trodden and accustomed paths in which our fancy is wont to wander, and giving up our hand into that of our strange guide, follow in child-like simplicity and confidence, wherever his genius may prompt him to lead us. If we do this, we shall not fail to find regions of rare and varied beauty, unfolding their treasures to us as we proceed, and everywhere the brilliant atmosphere, and mellow golden light of a poetic imagination, hovering over and pervading the landscape.

We know of nothing, that approaches this work in exuberance and prodigality of genius, in the lavish expenditure that is exhibited of all the richest materials of poetry; neither are the closing scenes without a pure spiritual beauty, a divine glory which reflects back its mellow radiance, along the whole rich vista of the narrative, lined as it is with images of beauty and terror, magnificence and simplicity, grotesqueness and gloom.

In these concluding pages, every sentence, every line is full of meaning, yet are the thoughts expressed with so much conciseness and simplicity, that it is not often at a first reading, that we take in their entire significance. They are like those paintings of the old masters, where color is often laid upon color to produce the effect of entire transparency. How much, for instance, is implied in that reply of a happy spirit to the entreaty of Mephistophiles, that she would approach and bless him with her presence.

“We approach e’en now, — wherefore dost thou recoil?
We come, — then stay thee if thou canst and meet us.”

But this he cannot do. How finely do these lines indicate that heaviest punishment of wickedness, the incapacity to draw near to, or even to bear the approach of goodness and purity, — not hatred, but love itself becomes their avenger, and, self-exiled, they shun the pure atmosphere of light and love, which to them seems an element of torture.

Ever in reading this poem are we discovering some

new beauty, some fine and delicate meaning which had hitherto escaped the notice. There are, it is true, many things here which we do not understand, many which from our remote position can be seen into but dimly and imperfectly, — many indeed, which in our eyes are decided blemishes and defects. Yet we leave these last to those critics, who have already shown themselves so prompt in discovering the errors of this great man.

A recent number of Blackwood's Magazine contains an article on Goethe, expressing such extravagant and indiscriminate condemnation, exhibiting such determined opposition, and such a total want of candor, that we had supposed there could be but one feeling in regard to it, among those who knew anything of the subject of all this invective. Yet not only has this article been highly commended by a writer in the *Foreign Quarterly*, but the same extravagant and reckless hostility expressed with an increased degree of virulence. So utterly misplaced and unfounded do some of these observations appear, that they would almost lead a calm observer to believe, that the writer, having a talent for invective and denunciation, had exercised his gift indiscriminately on the first luckless victim that chanced to fall in his way, especially as no attempts have been made to substantiate these charges. After lavishing the most bitter opprobrium upon "elaborate infamies of which no maid, no wife, no woman could hear but the outline," the names of which "elaborate infamies" are not even once mentioned, lest perhaps these, too, might prove offensive to the fastidious reader, he at last ceases to war with shadows and says more definitely, "But we are reminded of Faust." In what does the marvel of this consist? In what is Goethe's claim borne out to the title of the German Shakspeare? Shakspeare ruled the heart and swayed the sympathies of mankind, — his thoughts lay open the intellectual world of man, his aspirations ennoble the mind. The most that Goethe does is to surprise: when he talks of feeling, it is to drone

or to sneer, his powers are fantastical, his imaginations half cold," &c. &c. What must we think of such criticism as this, proceeding, too, from a work that affects to guide the tastes of the whole English nation in foreign literature!

"*In what does the marvel of Faust consist?*" since it in no way resembles the works of the great English dramatist. And again, "*when Goethe talks of feeling, it is to drone!*" Has this writer read the story of Margaret?—and does he call its profound heart-rending pathos, its touching simplicity and tenderness, "*droning?*" Has he read unmoved the eloquent appeal of "*Clärchen?*" Has he looked coldly on the desolate anguish of Tasso,—on the silent, life-consuming passion of Mignon? If so, it were in vain to remonstrate with him; we might as well talk of colors to the blind.

At length, after a series of quotations from *Faust*, whose excellence is faintly and reluctantly admitted, he comes at last to speak of that sublime chorus of the archangels, whose surpassing majesty has no parallel, save in the inspired writings of the prophets and bards of Israel. This noble chaunt differs essentially from all creations of the kind. Milton's *Address to Light*, Coleridge's *Hymn to Mount Blanc*, and Byron's *Thunder Storm amid the Alps*, all, great and glorious as they are, seem still to be the efforts of a finite being, striving to raise itself to the conception of the infinite; but here there is no effort, no striving after sublimity. The calm, free, majestic movement of the verse seems like the unimpeded motion of the heavenly orbs through the vaults of space. It is indeed a song of the archangels. One would have thought that *here*, at least, the critic would have felt and owned the divine power of genius, and been awed for once into reverence and silence. But let us hear his comments upon this matchless poem. "*This passage*," he says, "*is elaborately gorgeous; but if the wonders of creation were the theme, why confine it to the mere terrestrial phenomena?* The opening would indicate

the necessity of more, but it opens so only to disappoint us. The planetary and other systems were known fully at the time this was written, and yet they are not referred to. There is nothing here, like the grandeur of the cloud-capt towers and gorgeous palaces of Shakspeare's age, — far less of his genius." (!)

We are here forcibly reminded of a fanciful little story of Tieck's, in which we are told how a worthy matter-of-fact sort of man, who was always questioning of the "*cui bono*," having by chance strayed into the region of the ideal, — the "Garden of Poesy," found himself strangely at a loss, how to interpret the unaccustomed sights and sounds that greeted him on every side. He compared the appearances around with the most approved models, — tested them by the most unexceptionable standards, but could make nothing of them. The flowers were often larger than life, and presented many new combinations of color. They had, moreover, human voices, and conversed eloquently and fluently, a fact which he could in no way reconcile with the teachings of experience and common sense, — at length, chancing to meet with a joint stool, a table, and a surloin of roast beef, he begins to feel himself quite *au-fait*, — these are tangible palpable realities; he knows at once their uses and ends, and promptly avails himself of them. Our translator has somewhere finely said, that "there are some people whom nature has made non-conductors to the electricity of genius."

In this article, Goethe is constantly spoken of as a mere artist, the word being used in that limited sense commonly assigned to it by English writers, and the term being very frequently confounded with *artificialty*. Goethe was in so far an artist, that he applied himself with a sincere devotion to the study and contemplation of the beautiful, but we may everywhere see, that he does this in the full faith, that there is an eternal connexion between beauty, — goodness, and truth, — and indeed, do not the good and the true necessarily evolve themselves from the beautiful, even as the

fruit from the flower? Schiller has a beautiful passage to this effect in his "Artist." The opening lines of which we venture to give from a perhaps imperfect recollection of the original, yet we are sure of the thought.

"Through Beauty's morning gate alone,
We penetrate to wisdom's throne;
Tempered by her auroral ray,
The mind may brave Truth's noontide sway."

And Rousseau somewhere says, "*J'ai toujours cru que le bon n'étoit que le beau mis en action.*"

In the same spirit he has been condemned as cold and trifling, for being able to throw himself with such entire unreserve into the occupation of the moment, for that rare power of mental concentration, which enabled him to elicit from the subject of his contemplation, however trivial might be its nature, all the instruction and amusement it was capable of affording. He loved the finite not for itself, but that he saw in it ever a type and symbol of the infinite. He looked on nature with a microscopic eye, and a thousand secret treasures were revealed to his devout and earnest gaze. A flower, a mineral, or an insect, was to him a mine of exhaustless wealth. Thus, too, did he view the incidents and characters of every-day life. His spirit was so rich and comprehensive, that it often, as in some parts of *Wilhelm Meister*, imparted his own rich hues to the most common objects and incidents of this working-day world,—like the golden atmosphere of a Claude, diffused over and pervading the scenes of a *Van Ostade* or a *Feniers*.

Goethe's writings have been often objected to, on the ground of their not teaching any definite and distinct moral. *Wilhelm Meister* is supposed to be deficient in this respect,—yet experience teaches us to perceive a moral in all the events of life. Why then may we not do this in a work of art? If the writer has drawn a faithful picture of life, why may we not find for ourselves the moral, without its being directly pointed out for us? Goethe says in his conversations

with Eckermann, "that he had supposed, that a rich and manifold life brought close to the eye, might suffice without any distinct moral tendency." For us Wilhelm Meister possesses a species of interest, which we might look for in vain in the works of most English novelists. The bright and polished mirror of Scott's genius, instead of reflecting the spirit and character of the present age, flashes back upon us again and again some picture of other days. The age of chivalry and adventure, of romantic daring and high achievement, is represented by him in all its imposing magnificence. But there are times when we turn away from the splendid panorama of crusades and tournaments, of courts and camps, warriors and princes, to brood over the complex situations and feelings excited by the existing relations of social life, and would fain see them delineated by a hand as free and powerful as that of this great master. Those English writers, who have hitherto attempted the representation of life in the nineteenth century, have for the most part seized only its most superficial and obvious characteristics, without penetrating below the exterior covering, which is in itself alike destitute of pictorial or poetic beauty. The individual peculiarities of character are far less prominent now than formerly, the events of life less imposing, but beneath this calmer aspect, the undercurrent of thought and passion rushes perhaps with greater intensity and force. This inner life of the spirit is one which Scott, with all his richness of invention and dramatic power, could not have depicted. Coleridge went so far as to say, "that Scott had never presented him with a single new idea." Yet in his own broad range, he was ever bold, masterly, and true. He has brought to the Temple of English literature the richest treasures, and adorned its proud walls with an embroidered tapestry wrought in rare and enduring colors. We honor him for what he has so nobly done, and ask not that he should have been other than he was. For one person, who reads such a work as Wilhelm Meister, we may find thou-

sands who delight in the animated, pictorial scenes of Scott, and the school to which he has given rise. Many probably would throw aside *Wilhelm Meister* with distaste after reading a few pages, yet we venture to say, that few, who have read the book once, have read it *but* once. It is a work so suggestive to a thinking mind, it presents so rich and profound a study to the observer of human nature, that we find ourselves often returning to it, to compare the examples of life there depicted, with the results of our own experience and observation. No one knew better than Goethe, how to analyze the blended elements of social life, so as to produce at will new combinations and associations, alike true to individual nature and in harmony with the ideal world of art.

We would say one word ere we close, on the manner in which the study of German literature is too frequently regarded by our countrymen. Goethe says, "that it is in the German nature, duly to honor everything produced by other nations." The Americans, on the contrary, seem in danger of becoming too exclusively national. We could wish that they had a little more of the German cosmopolitanism. Perhaps it is natural, that whenever any attempt is made by a portion of the community to lead the public mind to new trains of thought or modes of action, to introduce new theories, or point out new fields for exertion or enterprise, that an antagonist party should spring up, whose tendency it is to resist all innovation. Perhaps it is a wise provision of nature, that has thus furnished every age with its centinels and warders, as well as with its bold and adventurous pioneers, — and provided they conduct themselves fairly and discreetly in their vocation, we have no desire to annul their office or deprive them of its rightful exercise. Let the sentinels give challenge to all new claimants, but let them not refuse admittance to any who can furnish a fair passport, and make out a clear title to be admitted within the guarded citadel of established and time-hallowed customs. Since the efforts which have re-

cently been making, to introduce German literature among us, it is not unusual to hear the most unqualified, indiscriminate opposition expressed to the study of a language, rich in every department of its literature, and characterized by an originality and power of thought, which entitles it, in the opinion of the first European scholars, to an equal estimation with our own noble mother tongue. Yet we rejoice to discover, even in the bitterness of its opponents, an indication of the increasing interest with which the German is looked upon among us. We are in no way disturbed by the fear, that its subtilities, refinements, and abstractions, should have an evil influence on our national character, the individuality of which seems in no danger of being neutralized by such antagonist principles, though it may perchance be favorably modified by them. "The Germans have their faults," the author of this translation of Eckermann has somewhere told us, "but these faults are as good as virtues to us, since being the exact opposites of our own, they may teach us most important lessons."

The opposers of German literature are fond of advocating the claims of common sense over those of philosophy, of elevating the actual over the ideal. They talk much, and rather vaguely of Transcendentalism, — they tell us of the folly of believing in innate ideas, and triumphantly quote Locke and his "*tabula rasa*." They are afraid of all vagueness and mysticism, and tremble like children at the shadowy appearances seen in the twilight. They will have nothing to do with that which they cannot handle, — they will receive nothing which they cannot fully comprehend, — they like to see all objects clearly and sharply defined in the broad light of day. Yet at night, in the darkness, we may see much that cannot be seen by day. The near glare of the sun conceals from us those far lights of heaven, that are forever burning in the vaults of space, even as the acute, shrill sounds of day, prevent us from hearing the deep voices of nature. The Shechinah, which was by day only a cloud of smoke, became by night a pillar of fire.

In literature their favorite models are those writers who are most remarkable for clearness, polish and precision. They seem to prefer vigorous rather than comprehensive thinkers, — writers whose vision is clear but limited, — who deal manfully with facts and events, but care not to penetrate beyond the surface of being, showing us things as they *are*, without questioning of the how and the why. They love to “pace steadily and safely along with the smooth-tongued Addison, the gorgeous Johnson, and the sublime Burke,” never deviating from the direct path, and looking upon all who go down in diving-bells, or mount up in balloons, as hair-brained tempters of fate.

They fear all new aspects of truth, and gravely tell us, that “it is better with our fallible natures and limited capacities, to rest with humble reliance upon certain ideas and opinions that have been received as plausible, rejecting all speculations upon subjects which can never be decided nor farther developed, while the soul remains in the thralls of flesh.”

Supposing a reflective mind could bring itself to act upon this suggestion, or rather to cease from acting, for ourselves, we know of no opinions which *have* been universally received as “plausible,” and did we know any such, we could not receive them as truths, until they had been submitted to the test of our own reason. Who shall tell us, that any man or class of men have monopolized the right of thought? What is truth to another is not truth to us, until our own understanding has verified it. Whatever danger there may be in leaving every man to decide for himself, there is surely far less than in any attempt to restrict the individual right of opinion, through regard to expediency or respect for authority.

We could not, if we would, have every man a philosopher, and we think there need be little fear, that our countrymen will become infected by any undue fondness for abstract researches. The mind that has never tried to grasp the great problems of human life and destiny, — that has never sought to wrest a reluct-

ant meaning from the hieroglyphic characters inscribed on the broad page of nature, *needs* no such restriction, — the mind that *has* done this, will hardly be checked in its onward impulse by the *cui bono* of the utilitarian. It sounds almost like mockery, to ask one who has ever caught a single ray of the warm, living light of the sun of truth, to satisfy himself with the frippery, gilt-paper toy of “plausibility.”

These timid counsellors remind us of Solomon’s slothful man, who keeps housed and says, “there is a lion in the streets, if I go forth I shall be slain.” There are some who cannot be thus easily restrained, — they must “go forth,” even at a worse peril, — they must meet the lion and wrestle with it as they may, — and often do they find, that when they look their formidable foe calmly in the face, he loses all his terrors and becomes at once harmless and tractable.

These people are constantly opposing Revelation to Nature, and Faith to Reason. We cannot agree with them in apprehending any danger to Christianity, from the investigation of calm, tolerant, philosophic spirits, who fear not to look at both sides of a question, lest they should meet with something opposed to established and time-hallowed opinions.

The timid faith that fears to question, cannot satisfy us, — such assent is far worse than honest denial. The only fatal skepticism, as it seems to us, is that of the man who wants faith in the human soul and fears to trust its promptings.

For ourselves, we rejoice in the increasing number of these, who are willing to follow truth wherever she may lead them, in the spirit of that child-like confidence and perfect love which casteth out fear. We look for the time when philosophy shall aid in reconciling reason and faith, — not by depressing faith but by elevating reason. When we shall be able to interpret in all its beautiful simplicity the word of him, who taught us to read the gospel of nature, — to observe the lilies of the field, — and to seek for the kingdom of heaven within our own hearts.

The enforcement of this self-reliance, this faith in the power of the individual to discover for himself truth, is one of the leading heresies of which the "New School" is accused. Yet highest stars of heaven may be seen mirrored within the single drop of dew that trembles within the heart of the violet.

This faith in truth and nature, — this desire to free the mind from its slavery to creeds and conventionalities, though the growth of no particular school, has, it is true, within the last twenty years been more profoundly felt, and more earnestly inculcated, than at any former period. It gives a tone to all the noblest literature of the day, and is slowly but surely working a change in the character of the times.

It is this which prompted the obnoxious declaration of Dr. Channing, that "man is great as man, be he what and where he may." This is what was implied by Emerson, when he said, "let a man plant himself on his instincts, and the whole world will come round to him," — or in other words, everything will work in harmony with him. It is this which illumines every page of Carlyle as with the glory of an inspired scroll, and imparts to the profound philosophy of Cousin its vivifying power.

This doctrine which was taught by a few sincere and simple spirits, amid the darkest gloom of Jewish superstition and bigotry, has caused one of the most true-hearted believers of our own day to assert, that the vital truths of Christianity are too deeply wrought into the very nature of the human soul, to be in any danger from a free and fearless examination into the true character of the Christian miracles. It is this growing conviction, which is beginning to render all persecution for opinion's sake as disgraceful as it ever was futile, — and this it is, above all, which is teaching the instructors and guardians of youth, that the great objects of education are not to be achieved by the exhibition of facts, or the inculcation of theories, but by developing and strengthening the powers of the mind for individual and independent action.

Much, though not all of this is, we think, attributable, more or less directly, to the Germans. Much, that in our own literature is but faintly and dimly shadowed forth, is in theirs developing itself in free and luxurious growth. In the German literature, to use one of their own expressive phrases, "Man finds himself."—The "sweet, sad music of Humanity" pervades every department of it. In its deep, earnest, philosophic spirit; in its fearless, trusting, transparent simplicity; in the holy fervor of its poets, the serene, spiritual, far-reaching gaze of its theologians and moralists, we may find much which even the rich classical literature of England cannot supply.

To us Germany has ever been a bright land of promise, since first in early youth we listened, with kindling heart and eager sympathy, to the tidings which Madame De Staël had brought us of a people, who, in an age of artificiality, had dared to follow the suggestions of their own spirits, and to show us nature, as she had mirrored herself within their own hearts. And now, having possessed ourselves of the golden key, which is to unlock to us this rich world of thought, we cannot but glory in our new found treasures, and endeavor to win others to become partakers of our joy.

Providence, August 15, 1839.

ART. III.—*An Oration, delivered before the United Brothers Society of Brown University, at Providence, R. I., September 3, 1839.* By O. A. BROWNSON.

THE anniversary of a literary society composed of young men, who are prosecuting, or who have just closed their academical studies, can never be without its interest. It is a season of pleasant recollection,

and joyful hope. Literature, in the progress of events, has become a power, and one of the mightiest powers of our times ; and whatever, therefore, pertains to it, or to those who cultivate it, must have a deep interest for all who have not yet to learn, that their own lot is bound up with that of their kind.

The influence of literature on the destiny of nations, its power to develop the energies of the soul, to purify the taste, exalt the sentiments, enlarge the views, and advance the civilization of mankind, were, perhaps, an appropriate subject to be discussed on an occasion like the one which now calls us together ; but I have thought that I should best consult my own powers and your wishes, by choosing a more limited, but I hope not a less interesting subject. I have, therefore, selected the hackneyed, but important subject of *American Literature*. This is a subject which must be uppermost in your thoughts, as scholars and as patriots. Every young man, who engages in literary pursuits, doubtless hopes to be able one day to do somewhat to advance the literature of his country, and to exalt her intellectual character in the eyes of the world.

In considering *American literature*, it will not be my object to point out its various characteristics, and to dwell on what it has already achieved. When the question is between us and foreigners, who reproach us for not having accomplished more for the literature of the world, it may become us to assume as proud an air, and to speak in as lofty tones as we can ; but when the question is merely a domestic one, and we are discussing it in our own family circle, it behooves us rather to inquire why our literature has not attained to a larger and healthier growth, and by what means it may become worthy of ourselves and of our country. This inquiry is the subject to which I respectfully invite your attention.

Of *American Literature* as it has been, and even as it now is, not much is to be said flattering to our national vanity. We have produced some works respec-

table for their practical aims and utility; we have brought forth much which passes for poetry, but there is no great poem of American origin, unless we call Barlow's *Columbiad* such, — our only national epic, — and we could make up but a meagre collection of national songs. Latterly, we have given birth to some tolerable novels, and made a good beginning in history. But, aside from the newspaper press, which we are somewhat prone to underrate, we have produced nothing in the literary way whereof to boast. We have no literature that can begin to compare with the literature of England, the literature of Germany, or that of France.

To what are we to ascribe this? Many are somewhat prone to ascribe it to the fact, that we are a young people, and have not lived long enough to create a literature. They may not be wholly wrong in this. In a political sense, and in relation to the long future before us, we are undoubtedly a young people. But there is a sense in which we are an old people. We did not begin in this country as savages, or as barbarians. Our fathers were of a civilized race. They brought with them to these western wilds, the polity, arts, and refinements of civilized life. They could boast one of the richest literatures of the world. Chaucer, Shakspeare, Spenser, Bacon, Milton, were among our ancestors; and the literatures of the old world have ever been open to us. The Bible and the classics have been in our possession, and these lie at the bottom of all modern literature. I have, therefore, not much confidence in this plea of minority, on which our countrymen are so much disposed to rely. We must seek the cause of the meagreness of our literature elsewhere.

This cause is sometimes looked for in the democratic institutions which we have adopted. We have, it is said, no court the centre of fashion and elegance, to exalt the imagination, and give laws to taste; no long line of titled nobility, raised far above the people, and presenting us models of excellence. We

see, it is said, nothing great among us, no elevated rank to which we may aspire, and therefore can have no lofty ambition; and having no ambition to be great, we can produce nothing great. Our minds and deeds of a necessity sink down to the level of our conditions. This is the tory version of the matter, repeated with sickening frequency in the *London Quarterly*, and kindred prints in the old world and the new. But there is nothing in democratic institutions to hinder the expansion of mind, to check the play of fancy and imagination, or to impede free thought and free utterance. It is true, that we democrats have little room for the display of that ambition, which craves to be raised to the Baronetage, or to be called my Lord; but we have in revenge ample room for the workings of the somewhat loftier ambition to be a man amongst men, and to devote ourselves to the service of our God, our country, or our race. That democratic institutions are not unfavorable to the creation of a free, rich, and living literature, the sacred remains of Athenian literature are amply sufficient to prove.

One of the real causes of the meagreness of our literature is to be looked for, I apprehend, in the fact, that we were for a long time dependent as Colonies on England. The condition of Colonists, which so long continued, generated a feeling of dependence, a habit of looking to England for direction in nearly all cases, which we have not yet wholly surmounted. Colonists almost invariably regard the mother country as their moral and intellectual superior. It is their native land; their home, to which they look back as exiles, with deep yearning and tender recollection. In it are the objects with which they are most familiar, which are dear to the heart, and around which cluster all the hallowed associations of childhood and youth. They borrow its language, its laws, its customs, fashions, sentiments, and opinions. Through these the mother country exerts an almost absolute spiritual dominion over the colonies, which may be continued long

after events shall have severed the political ties which bind them together.

This is especially true, if the mother country be herself really a noble nation, ranking among the foremost nations of the civilized world, advanced in its literary and scientific culture, and filled with the monuments of a renowned ancestry. England, we all know, has her faults; her political constitution is a medley of jarring and discordant principles, and her administration is selfish, and rarely moral; but nevertheless, her people are among the most remarkable recorded in history. They want the sprightliness, the versatility, the clear perception and the keen relish of the Beautiful, so characteristic of the ancient Athenians; the warm household feelings, the strong religious faith, original and profound metaphysical thought of the modern Germans; the wit, the delicate taste, the expansiveness and sociability of their neighbors, the French; but they are brave, enterprising, energetic, practical,—the Romans of modern history, and a no inconsiderable advance on the Romans of antiquity. At the epoch of the colonization of this country, in their political institutions, and social arrangements, in literature and science, they were foremost among the leading nations of Europe. They were to the colonists, and not without some show of truth, to say the least, the first nation of the world.

Possessing this character, and held in this estimation by the colonists, England's dominion over their minds and hearts is nothing wonderful. The loyalty natural to the human heart, and especially to the English heart, which leads us to reverence and obey what we regard as above us, very naturally induced homage to England, and made us receive her word as law. There was little for us to reverence and obey in our wilderness homes. The colonists were few in number, strangers to one another, at best companions in exile. They were equals in rank, and very nearly equals in wealth, and intellectual attainments. All that *they had been accustomed* to regard as superior to

themselves, was in the mother country. Where else, then, were they to look for their spiritual sovereign?

The colonists, we know, did in fact regard the mother country with the greatest deference, and with childlike affection. This is seen in the institutions they adopted, the laws they enacted, the usages they perpetuated, and the names they gave to their towns and villages. All these speak of home, of fatherland. Everywhere did they seek to reproduce England, or to erect monuments to her memory. They gloried in calling themselves Englishmen; and whatever was English, was right in their eyes, — unless it conflicted with some immediate interest, or with their interpretation of the Jewish and Christian codes. On these latter points, our fathers showed no want of independence. From England they imported all their articles of luxury, and most of those of use; from England, also, they received their fashions, usages, and most of their sentiments and opinions.

The Revolution which converted the colonies into independent States, and sundered the political ties which bound us to Great Britain, changed but little of all this. After the temporary animosity generated by the struggle for independence had subsided, the affection of the people for England revived in nearly all its former force. England was still the mother country. She was still in our estimation, if not in fact, our moral and intellectual superior. She continued to manufacture our cottons and woollens, our knives and forks, our fashions, our literature, our sentiments and opinions. We regarded her, after the Revolution, in all but political matters, as the superior and ruling nation. We wished for her approbation; we sought her sanction for what we had done and were doing; and were anxious that she should own that we had not been naughty children in running away from our mother and setting up for ourselves.

Here, if I mistake not, is a chief cause why we have made no greater advances in literature. With this feeling towards England, we must needs regard

her literature as the model of excellence, and anxious to commend ourselves to her grace, we must needs conclude that, in order to do it, we must write as much like Englishmen as possible. Feeling ourselves inferior, we could have no confidence in our own taste or judgment, and therefore could not think and speak freely. We could not be ourselves. We could not trust the workings of our own minds. We were safe only when we thought as the English thought, wrote as the English wrote, or sang as the English sang. But how the English thought, wrote, or sang, we could, at the distance we were placed, and the little intercourse we had with good English society, know but imperfectly. When, therefore, we attempted to write, we were like those who write in a foreign language, which they have studied only late in life, and which they have but imperfectly acquired. The energy of mind, due to the subject we proposed to treat, was wasted in avoiding Americanisms, and in trying to conceal the place of our birth and education. We sank of necessity into servile imitators, into mere copyists; and in seeking to write as Englishmen, abdicated our power to write as Americans, and as men.

Whoever would attain to excellence in anything, must repose a generous confidence in himself. He must feel that he is equal to what he undertakes. He must proceed calmly and with a conscious strength to his task. If he doubts himself, if he feels that he must make an effort, that he must strain, he will do nothing but betray his weakness. We Americans in literary matters have had no self-confidence. There is no repose in our literature. There is ever a straining after effect, a labor to be eloquent, striking, or profound. This proceeds in a great measure from the fact, that we have found our model of excellence, not in our own minds and hearts, nor in human nature generally, but in the literature of that land from which our forefathers came. Instead of studying man, we have studied English literature; in-

stead of drawing our inspirations from the universal reason, which glows within and agitates the American heart, not less than the English heart, we have sought them in the productions of the English muse. We have written and sung, or at least aimed to write and sing, for Englishmen, and to gain the applause, or escape the censure of the English critic. Hence our minds have been crippled, and our literature has been tame and servile.

But so long as we retain the memory of our colonial dependence on England, we shall not attain to literary excellence. We shall attain to freedom and originality, and produce works worthy of admiration for their freshness and power, not till we dare set up for ourselves; till we come to feel that American human nature is as rich as English human nature; that the emotions and the forms of speech, natural to an American, are as proper in themselves, as conformable to the laws of universal human nature, as those natural to an Englishman; and that Boston, New York, or Providence, has as much right to decide authoritatively on matters of taste and composition, as London.

Another cause of the meagreness of our literature, nearly akin to the one just mentioned, is to be found in the fact, that our literary men have been but slow to accept our democratic institutions, and conform to the order of things which our fathers established. Educated in schools modelled after the English, early accustomed by the literature they study, and the lessons of their professors to distrust the people, to look upon democratic institutions as unfavorable to the development of genius, and to regard the institutions of their own country as a doubtful experiment, they have failed to imbibe the national spirit, and have therefore been able to fetch but a feeble echo from the national heart. Till quite recently, the literary men of our country have not sympathized with the people, and have had in their hearts no deep and abiding love, as they have had in their minds no clear conceptions of the great

doctrine of equal rights and social equality, to which this nation stands pledged. They may have had a tender concern for the people; they may have been willing to labor to enlighten them; they may even have preferred a republican form of government, but they have not been true democrats in their hearts. There has been a great gulf between them and the American people.

Now nothing is more certain than that the men, who create a national literature, must be filled with the spirit of their nation, be the impersonations of its wishes, hopes, fears, sentiments. The American people are democratic,—I use the word in its etymological and philosophical sense,—and consequently the creators of American literature must be democrats. It is not I that says this; it is truth, it is philosophy, and therefore if you dislike it, blame not me. No man, who studies attentively the American people, can doubt that their souls, however defective their utterance, or crude their notions, are wedded to democracy. No party, not believed to be democratic, can rise in the nation to even a respectable minority; and no measure, believed to be anti-democratic, can stand any chance of success. We may deny this, we may quarrel with it, and declare it altogether wrong; but so it is; and it is only they who conform to it, not from policy, but from the heart, from the real love of democracy, and a full understanding of what it is, that can do much to advance American literature. The fact, that the majority of our literary men have been distrustful of the democracy, or opposed to it, is one reason why our literature has not attained to a larger growth, and become more honorable to the country.

Another cause, why our literature has continued so meagre, is to be found in the circumstances of our country, which have made no great literary demands, and which have turned our mental energies almost altogether in another direction. Literature is not a nation's first want, any more than reading and writing is the first want of the individual. We are not, pro-

perly speaking, as I have said, a young people, but ours is a young country. We received it at a comparatively recent period, fresh from the hands of nature. We have had the primitive forests to clear away, the virgin soil to cultivate, commerce and manufactures to call into existence and encourage, cities and villages to erect; roads, canals, and railways to construct; in a word, our whole material interests to provide for, and the field of our future glory to prepare. Here was our first work, and in this work we have shown our creative powers, displayed our skill and energy, and done that whereof it is permitted us to boast. While engaged in this work, we could not turn our attention to the cultivation of a national literature. Moreover, while engaged in this work, while clearing away the forest, planting the rose in the wilderness, and erecting cities and villages where lately prowled the beast of prey, or curled the smoke of the wigwam, literature adequate to our wants was furnished by the mother country, of a better quality, and at a cheaper rate than we could furnish it for ourselves. Here is, after all, the chief cause of the deficiency of our literature, and the main reason why we have so long remained the literary vassals of England.

The truth is, there has been, as yet, no great demand for literature among us. We have been engaged in no great work for the successful prosecution of which literature was necessary, and the activity of our minds, and the sentiments of our hearts, have found thus far their utterance in deeds rather than in words. This remark, to those who have not reflected, may seem of little importance. It may be thought that literature, like virtue, is independent on time and place, and may spring up wherever it is the will of scholars that it should. But literature is no arbitrary creation. It is dependent on higher laws than those of human enactment. It comes only when it is needed, and comes always in a shape and of a quality, in commercial phrase, to suit the market. No matter what your schools are, or what is the number and ex-

cellence of your scholars, you cannot force its growth, or introduce it before its time.

Literature springs up only in those epochs when there is some great work to be performed for the human race, when there are great moral, philosophical, or social problems up for solution, and when all minds and hearts are busy with them. It never amounts to anything in a nation or in an epoch, where all is settled. China is full of schools and literary men; and what is more, holds literature in the highest honor, and finds her aristocracy in her scholars; yet has China no literature worth naming. In that land of immobility, of routine, where all is prescribed, where all change is prohibited, and everything must be to-day what it was yesterday, what can literature be but an empty form, or an endless repetition? No new thought is there permitted, no new problem ever comes up for solution, and what can literature find there to do?

If you consult literary history, you will find that there is no literature, ancient or modern, which is not indebted for its existence to some social fermentation, to some social change or revolution, which has brought along a new class of sentiments to be uttered, or raised up new problems to be solved. The men, who contribute to its existence or growth, are always men affected by the movement spirit. They are dissatisfied with what is. Weary of the present, they look back and yearn for what appears to them the serene past; or they look forward to the future, see in their mind's eye an unrealized good, which they must struggle to obtain. In this they do but represent their age. The spirit, the hope, or the regret which agitates them, agitates the mass. It is on this condition that they become popular, and it is on the condition of being popular, that their works form a part of the literature of their epoch.

This fact will appear evident, if we glance at a few of the more renowned literatures of the world. The most remarkable literature of the an-

cient world, though of limited extent, is the Jewish. This literature lies at the bottom of all modern literature. The Bible, more than Greek and Roman literature, has influenced the scholars of modern Europe. But this remarkable literature is not the gradual and regular accumulation of centuries. It is the production of a few but distinct epochs, and all these epochs are epochs of change, or of fermentation. The first division marks the passage of the Hebrew people from the nomadic state to that of fixed dwellings, and the wars consequent upon that passage; the second division is produced by the change of the government from a theocracy to a monarchy; the third is indebted for its existence to the struggle between the national worship and the idolatry of the surrounding nations; the Babylonian conquest, the return from captivity, the rebuilding of the temple, and the reestablishment of the national worship, are the great events which produce the rest.

The history of Grecian literature bears witness to the same fact. We know not the exact date of the Homeric poems, but they were evidently composed when the Grecian mind was experiencing more than its wonted activity. The *Iliad* marks an epoch when Greece was parcelled out among petty princes, who oppressed their subjects, wasted their lands, and devoured one another by perpetual wars. The poet remembers or feigns a happier past, sighs over the present, and pours out his soul to call the Grecian princes to union and peace. The *Odyssey*, though of a later date, marks also an epoch of commotion, but less turbulent than that of the *Iliad*. We see in the *Odyssey* the dawn of an era of peace, some indications even of a nascent republicanism. Commerce begins to flourish, agriculture to attract attention, and the various other peaceful arts begin to be cultivated. Hesiod marks an epoch of transition. The heroic ages have passed away; "the age of chivalry," as Burke would say, "is gone." It is no longer an age of wild adventure, rapine, and war. The cities are adopting a republican rule, and striving to introduce something

like civil order. Still the evils of the precedent lawless life are fresh in men's memories, and sadden their hearts. It is a period of painful recollection, as well as of sweet hope. Much remains to be done, and the poet steps forward with a grave air and an earnest spirit to call men to the worship of the Gods, and the cultivation of the earth; to a peaceful, religious, and industrious life.

The Persian wars, that mighty struggle between Europe and Asia, between the Past and the Future, in which the Future so gloriously triumphed at Marathon, Platea, and Salamis, that fearful contest between the aristocratic element and the democratic, of which Sparta represented the aristocratic, and Athens the democratic, and that other contest, moral and intellectual, excited between the advocates of the national mythology, and the new philosophy introduced by Socrates, and carried so near perfection by the beautiful and sublime genius of Plato, — these great struggles, and the mighty questions they raised, occur in what we regard as the most brilliant epoch of Grecian literature. When these contests were over, the questions they raised disposed of, Grecian genius fell asleep, and has not yet awaked.

Rome bears witness to the same. Rome existed for many centuries without creating a literature. Her state was originally a monarchy; subsequently it passed under the rule of the nobles, where it continued until near the epoch of the empire. But the democracy early made its appearance, and began its struggle for its rights. It gained some slight concessions in the Licinian law, and the establishment of the Tribunes; it demanded a few of its rights virtuously and eloquently under the Gracchi, factiously under Marius, criminally under Catiline, triumphantly under Julius Cæsar; it was duped by Anthony and Octavius, merged in the emperor under the Cæsars, and expired in the last of the pretorian guards, to be resuscitated in the camp of the Nazarenes by the cross of Christ. The period in which this struggle was fiercest is, as

every tyro knows, that which is denominated the golden age of Roman literature. The contest did not indeed rage under the reign of Augustus, the period when so many writers flourished, but all these writers were born and reared amid the strife, and had taken part in it.

The history of the Church shows, that its literature springs up in its seasons of controversy with paganism, heresy, philosophy, or infidelity. When Orthodoxy reigns unquestioned, and all is reduced to uniformity of opinion, literature cannot flourish. The wild crusades which rolled the hosts of Europe upon Asia, filled with a spirit of religion, adventure, and rapine, were followed by the Troubadours and Minnesingers. The brilliant literature of Modern Italy, immortalized by the illustrious names of Dante and Tasso, owes its birth to the struggle to reproduce or preserve the municipal regime of republican Rome, and to the fermentation of men's minds, which preceded and prepared the Protestant Reformation. The effort to maintain Protestantism in England, and to give it supremacy over Catholicism, is marked by the masculine literature of the age of Elizabeth. The richest portion of English literature belongs to the seventeenth century; and what is that century in England but an epoch of political and religious revolutions, defeated, effected, or adjourned? The French boast the literature of the age of Louis XIV., and not without reason. A literature which embraces the names of Bossuet, Fenelon, Corneille, Racine, and Moliere, not to mention others, may well justify a nation's boast. But what is that age but one of decided change in the constitution of the state? With Louis XIV., ended the Feudal monarchy in France, and was constituted the imperial monarchy of Rome, a monarchy representing, not the personal rights of the Barbarian Chieftain, but the Majesty of the State. The later literature of France belongs to the epochs, in which were elaborated in the public mind the revolution of 1789, and that of 1830. French literature has

declined since the present order of things has been established, and that it has not declined still more, is owing to the fact, that there is still a powerful party in France struggling for another Revolution.

And amidst what circumstances has arisen the world-renowned literature of Germany? Surely, amidst the fierce hostility of the social and moral elements. The war of elements has manifested itself somewhat less in outward deeds in Germany, than it has in France; but it has been not the less fierce on that account. Germany has felt the shock of the contending elements, which for the last three fourths of a century has shaken the world. Everybody knows this has been a period of wide and deep commotion. All that was old, and hitherto deemed venerable, has been arraigned; the throne, the altar, and even the state have been summoned to the bar; the people, for almost the first time since history began, have stepped upon the stage, and in rough tones demanded the right to play their part in the piece. Thrones have been subverted, dynasties have been changed, old customs abolished, new systems, new usages, and almost a new language introduced. It has been a fearful age. The timid have quaked, and the bravest have at times turned pale. The whole world has seemed loosened from its fastenings. Work of all kinds, for all heads, and all hearts, has there been. We have had kings to defend, nobilities to defend, priesthoods to defend, religion itself to defend; we have had new theories to put forth, illustrate, and reduce to practice; the whole movement party to support and urge onward, and a clear and piercing voice to utter for the poor, the friendless, and the down-trodden. All this has passed over the German mind and heart, and found its utterance in her own Teutonic tones, in a literature that the world will not willingly let die.

But why proceed further in the attempt to establish, what perhaps nobody will deny, that literature comes but when it is bidden, but at those epochs when there

is work to be done for the human race? In all the instances I have referred to, as well as in the many I have passed over, there were great questions at issue, grave problems up for solution, with which the minds and hearts of the multitude were busy; and the men who contributed to the literature were also busy with these questions, these problems; felt a deep and thrilling interest in them; were men who saw work to be done, and came forth with what skill and energy were in them to do it.

This rapid survey, which I have taken of a few points in literary history, may teach us that we must not rely on our schools nor on our scholars. If we have not already created a literature, of which we need not be ashamed, it is because we have not had a work for Humanity to perform which demanded a literature; and if we are to have a literature, we must have some great work to do which will need it.

The great questions, which have agitated Europe since the middle of the last century, have never but partially agitated us; and so far as they have agitated us at all, they were settled by our political revolution. We secured then all that the old world has as yet contended for. We established then a republican government, which was already established in our convictions and in our habits, and we fancied that we had solved the social problem for ever. The wild commotion of the old world has scarcely affected us. We have listened to the distant roar of her contending hosts with unmoved hearts and serene brows. We have stood upon the mountain, with our heads bathed in clear sunshine, and beheld the cloud below, seen the lightning flash and heard the thunder roll at our feet, with a tranquil pulse. Had we felt the same agitation that Germany felt, doubtless we should have contributed our share to the literature of the epoch. But in that fearful war we were not enlisted. We had served our campaign and were honorably discharged.

But have we solved the problem forever — finished

the work Humanity gave us to do? and is there henceforth nothing for us but to rest from our labors and repose beneath the laurels won by our fathers? As we answer this question, so must we answer the question whether there is to be an American literature. You may demand an American literature, you may give yourselves up to its creation with the generous enthusiasm of youth, and labor for it through life with unflagging zeal; but it shall be in vain, unless your country be called to perform a great and glorious work for the human race, and a work too for the successful accomplishment of which a free, rich, and living literature shall be indispensable. This is the law of Providence, and you cannot withdraw yourselves from its action. Have we then done our work? Is there nothing more for us to do?

Done our work! What mean we? Has the world fulfilled its mission, and is the human race about to be annihilated? One generation cometh and another goeth, but the earth abideth forever; individuals die, but the race is immortal. When an individual has fulfilled its work it dies; all beings die, when they have nothing more to do, and the human race itself is immortal only on the condition that there is for it an eternal task-work. But we are yet in the infancy of the race; we have but just begun our work; why then talk of its being ended? As well might the infant that has achieved its first step and ascertained that it can walk without assistance, lie down and say there is nothing more for it to do. Eternity is before us, and the progress of the race is illimitable. Let thought stretch its pinions, soar to the highest point it can reach, and man in his upward career shall rise above it.

But I need not resort to general principles to make out my case. Whoever has eyes to see or ears to hear, cannot fail to perceive that grave questions, problems of immense magnitude, are coming up among us and demanding a solution in tones which it is not in man to resist. The old world is still en-

gaged in the old war between the plebeians and the patricians. The great struggle going on there need not indeed alarm us, for it cannot come here. That struggle has for its object on the part of the people not republicanism in the state, nor equal wealth among the members of society, but the abolition of rank, founded on birth. It has never existed with us, and, as I have said, never can; for here birth confers no distinction. The struggle which is coming up here is not between the high born and the low born, between the gentlemen and the simplemen; for, thank God, we have learned that all who are born at all are well born. It is to be a struggle between the accumulator of wealth and the simple laborer who actually produces it; briefly, a struggle between MAN and MONEY. This struggle has not yet fairly commenced in the old world, but it must come there and ultimately make the tour of the globe.

In the old world, the interests of labor are, to a great extent, lost in the interests of the rich commoner, and will be, so long as the rich commoner finds an hereditary nobility above him. But here we have no hereditary nobility, no titled rank, no privileges of birth. We have established political equality, declared the lists open to all, and the prize to the swiftest runner. But we have not obtained in practice the equality we have established in theory. There are distinctions amongst us, inequalities, not without a long train of grievous evils, which an increasing party will hold to be compatible neither with the principles of our political institutions, nor with the true interests of Humanity. The question has already been asked, What are the boasted advantages of a democratic government, if the people under it are to be in point of fact cursed with all the evils of social inequality? What avails it that I am declared equal to my neighbor, when in fact I am regarded by him, and by myself, and by all others, as his social inferior, when he may task my labor almost at will, and fix himself the wages he shall pay me? when, in fact, he may live in ease and

luxury without labor, and I, an able-bodied man, and well skilled in all kinds of labor, can, by my simple labor, but barely keep myself and family from starving? The question has been asked, too, Can a rich man, a man who has accumulated and possesses great wealth, be a good Christian? There are those among us who begin to suspect that Jesus meant something when he said, "it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven." There are those who ask themselves, when they see the extremes of wealth and poverty which meet us in our cities, bloated luxury and pining want side by side, if this be a Christian order of things, if indeed this order of things is to last forever? As a Christian, am I not bound to love my fellow men, even the lowest and most polluted, well enough, if need be, to die for them, as Jesus died on the cross for me? Am I then permitted to avail myself of the labors of others, so as to accumulate an immense estate; am I then permitted to live in luxury, to feast on the rarities of every clime which commerce procures me, while my brother languishes in poverty, while the poor mother at my next door is watching, pale and emaciated, over her starving boy, and the poor sempstress is prostituting herself so as not to die of famine? You will see at once that these are fearful and searching questions, such as cannot be put in a tone of solemn earnest, without shaking society to its centre.

Questions like these are coming up amongst us. We may deny it, may seek to suppress them, or to hush the matter up; but come they will, and come they must. It is not in my power nor in yours to suppress these questions. We may regret as much as we will that they must come, but nothing remains for us but to meet them. The whole matter of wealth and labor, of the means by which wealth is accumulated, of the relation between capitalists and laborers, of wages, which a French nobleman has pronounced "a prolonged slavery," must come up, be discussed

and disposed of. To my view, questions relating to this matter, are the most fearful questions which can be asked, and they seem to me to involve a revolution to which all preceding revolutions were but mere child's play. Questions of equal magnitude have never come up for the discussion of Humanity, none which go so deep or extend so far. It is not for me to say what is to be the issue of this struggle between wealth and labor, and this is neither the place nor the occasion on which to decide the part the philosopher, the Christian, the philanthropist, ought to take. I have not put the questions I have for the purpose of answering them. I merely point you to a war of two great social elements, describe to you its dominant traits, and say, in that war, on one side or the other, we are all to enlist, and do battle as best we may.

In the struggle of these two elements, true American literature will be born. This struggle, which has already commenced, presents the conditions of its birth and its growth. We have now to solve, not the question of political equality, but the problem of social equality. This problem, if I have not wholly misconceived its magnitude and bearing, will present work for whomsoever has a hand, a head, or a heart; and in the effort to finish this work, a literature will be born before which all the literatures now extant may, perhaps, shrink into insignificance.

I confess, Brothers, that notwithstanding the fearful nature of the social contest I see coming on, I am not alarmed. I even behold it with the joy with which the war-horse snuffs the battle from afar. I behold it, and feel that I have not been born too early, nor too late; that there is work for me also, if I have but the skill and the courage to undertake it. And as to the result, I apprehend nothing. I have faith in principle; I have faith in Humanity; above all, I have faith in God. The right side in the long run always comes up, and the cause is ultimately victorious which ought to be victorious. Truth is never vanquished; right

cannot be defeated ; nor Humanity successfully betrayed. Onward through the ages the human race pursues its course. Kings, priests, nobles, may attempt to block up its path, but it pushes aside their feeble barriers, sweeps away their Bastiles, and passes on unobstructed through the marshalled ranks of their armed soldiery.

Whoso would contribute to American literature, ought indeed to reflect deeply on the nature and wants of his own soul ; ought to store his mind with the riches of ancient and modern literature and science ; but he must engage in this great work, live and labor with no thought of creating a literature, but give himself up wholly to the work of solving some great problem, or of making some great moral, religious, philosophical, or social principle prevail. If in his efforts to make what he believes the right cause triumphant, he utter a true word, Humanity shall catch it up and echo it through eternity. He must be an active, living man, living for his race, and striving to do its work. The discipline he needs is that which fits him to sympathize with Humanity, and strengthens him to do battle in her cause. The American poet must sing for the human race ; draw his inspiration not from Castaly, or Helicon, but from the human heart ; and the orator must not study to turn and polish his periods, but to kindle up his countrymen, to compel them to arm and march against the enemies of freedom, truth, justice, and love.

Rest easy, Brothers, as to literature. Regard literature always as a means, never as an end. Early seek out a noble end to be gained ; early wed yourselves to great principles ; early convince yourselves that you live for man, for truth, for God, and you shall speak, write, or sing words that shall not die, but which shall be life, and life-giving.

What will be the destiny of American literature, I know not, and pretend not to foretell. But this much you will permit me to say in conclusion, that God in

his providence has given the American people a great problem to work out. He has given it us in charge to prove what man may be, when and where he has free and full scope to act out the almightiness that slumbers within him. Here, for the first time since history began, man has obtained an open field and fair play. Everywhere else, up to the present moment, he has been borne down by kings, priests, and nobles; the loftier aspirations of his nature have been suppressed, and the fire of his genius smothered, by unhallowed tyranny. Long, long ages has he struggled under every disadvantage; and under every disadvantage, though oft defeated, he has never despaired, or bated a jot of heart or hope, but always rallied himself anew with fresh courage and strength to the combat. Here, at length, he has gained the vantage ground. No longer must he struggle for very existence; no longer must he make a wall of his dead body to protect his wife and little ones. His domestic hearth is sacred, his fields are safe from the invader, and his flocks and herds may graze unmolested. He can now choose his ground. He may now abandon the attitude of defence, and assume that of attack. He has no longer to defend his right to free thought and free speech, to the possession and use of himself. Here, thank God, we have no apologies to offer for speaking out for man, for truth, for justice, for freedom, for equality. We carry the war into the enemy's country. We summon the oppressor to judgment; the adherents to arbitrary governments, to superannuated creeds, and hoary abuses, to stand forth and show cause, if they can, why sentence shall not be pronounced against them. We call upon those recreants to their race, who believe all made for one, or the many for the few, to stand forth and give us a reason for the faith they avow. Here democracy is the order of the day, the PEOPLE are the orthodox party, and to them the aristocrat must answer for his heresy.

Such is the position we now occupy, such the progress we have made in working out the problem com-

mitted to us. Shall we stop here? I do not believe we shall. I do not believe that we shall prove false to our trust, or slight our work. I seem to myself to see many proofs around me, that we are beginning to comprehend more fully our mission, and to prepare ourselves to engage in earnest for its execution. I see this in the wide and deep agitation of the public mind; I see it in the new parties and associations which every day is forming; I see it in the weighty problems, moral, religious, social, political, economical, which both the learned and the unlearned are discussing; I feel it in the new spirit which has been of late breathed into American publications, and I recognise it in the increasing depth and earnestness of American writers. No; I cannot be mistaken. America will not be false to her mission. She will be true to that cause which landed our fathers on Plymouth Rock, which sustained the free mind and warm heart of Roger Williams, in which Warren fell, for which Washington fought, to which Franklin and Jefferson gave their lives. Sacerdocy has had its day; monarchy has had its day; nobility has had its day; and MAN, if there be justice in Heaven, shall have his day.

In prosecuting the work committed to us, there will arise poets, philosophers, theologians, politicians, whose wide and deep experience will find utterance in a living literature. When they will arise, how soon, or how late, I know not, ask not. And, Brothers, do not ye ask. But seek ye out the work God has given your country to perform for the human race; woo it as a bride; wed yourselves to it for better or for worse; be true to it in good report and in evil, in life and in death; and though you may not write books, compose poems, or construct theories, your lives shall be books, poems, theories, which will not die, but live,—live forever in the memory of your race, and, what is better, in the ever improving condition of all coming generations.

ART. V. — *The Currency, as affected by State Legislation and Local Usage.* — *The present Banking System destructive to Credit.* — *Paper Money more costly than Specie.* — *Palliatives for the existing Disorders.* — *Suffolk Bank System.* — *Safety Fund System.* — *New York General Banking Law.* — *Suppression of small Notes.* — *Remedy.* — *Separation of Bank and State.* — *Conclusion, Failure of the United States Bank of Pennsylvania.*

In a former number, we offered some remarks upon the great question of the Currency, so far as it falls within the jurisdiction, and is affected by the action of the General Government. On that occasion we pointed out, in the first place, very briefly, the inconveniences of the existing system. The principal function of the currency, that is, of money, is to operate as a *measure of value*; and the great evil in the existing system is, that the value of our paper money is subject to constant fluctuations, which render it entirely unfit to perform this office of measuring the value of other articles. We next adverted successively to the plans for the management of the public revenue, proposed by Mr. Webster, Mr. Rives, Mr. Clay, and the President, considered chiefly in their operation on the currency. We expressed the opinion that the use of banks, whether state or national, as depositaries of the public funds, have an injurious effect, by stimulating still farther a system, which tends but too rapidly by its own nature to excess, — that the General Government has no power under the constitution to *regulate* the issues of State banks, and that the measures proposed by the President of employing official treasurers to keep the public funds, and receiving in payment of dues to the Government only the legal currency of the country, would operate favorably upon the banks, by making it necessary for them to keep on hand a larger amount of specie than they have heretofore done. We remarked in conclu-

sion, that we should consider in subsequent pages the same great subject of the currency, as affected by state legislation and local usage. In the present article, we propose to redeem this pledge, by stating the principal considerations that bear upon this branch of the inquiry, as distinctly as may be in our power, although of necessity with a brevity very ill suited to the overwhelming magnitude and importance of the matter in hand.

Of the two branches of the subject, the one which we now propose to examine is, we need hardly say, by far the more important. It was probably the original intention of the founders of the constitution, that the currency should be controlled directly and exclusively by the General Government. For this purpose the General Government was invested with the coining power, and the States were prohibited from exercising that power, or from issuing bills of credit. It was, doubtless, anticipated that these two prohibitions taken together would cover the whole ground, and prevent the States from creating either paper or metallic currency in any shape. It is much to be regretted that this judicious intention has not taken effect. Unfortunately, in this as in so many other cases, the cupidity of interested individuals, sustained by the astuteness and technical spirit of the courts of justice, has defeated the objects of the wisest and the clearest legislation. At the time when these provisions were adopted there were very few banks in the country, and their issues of notes were probably either entirely overlooked, or considered as too unimportant to require regulation. But the banks rapidly increased in number, and poured out floods of paper, which filled up all the channels of circulation; and being received as money, by a natural law of trade, banished the precious metals entirely from the country. By this change of circumstances, the intention of the constitution was defeated in two most important points. First, the control of the currency was taken from the General Government, to which it had

been given by the constitution, and committed to the States, each acting for itself, independently of all the rest; and, secondly, a paper currency composed of the promissory notes of private banking corporations was substituted for the metallic money, which the constitution intended to make the only currency of the country.

The fluctuation, the confusion, and the manifold inconveniences of all kinds, that must necessarily result from this disastrous change of circumstances, soon became apparent, and some attempts have, from time to time, been made to correct the evil through the ordinary operation of the courts of justice. There can hardly, in fact, be a doubt in the mind of any reasonable man, that bank notes are bills of credit within the meaning of the prohibitory clause of the constitution, and that the States have no right to issue indirectly through chartered corporations a paper currency, which they have confessedly no right to issue directly. The Executive and Judiciary departments of the General Government by a prompt exercise of their appropriate powers might, without difficulty, have suppressed this great mischief at its commencement. But the first two administrations of the Government were friendly to the paper money system, and the same feeling has generally prevailed even up to the present day in the Supreme Court. No attempt, we believe, has ever been made to bring the question of the constitutionality of the present banking system to a direct decision; but whenever it has incidentally come under the notice of the courts, they have given their sanction to the existing usage, and the general opinion now seems to be, that, however originally doubtful or even clearly objectionable, it is established by prescription too firmly to be arrested. Thus a germ of evil, which, at the outset, was probably overlooked from its insignificance, had no sooner begun to attract attention, than it was declared to be so firmly rooted in public opinion, that it would not admit the the application of the natural and appropriate

remedy. It is easy to discern, at both these periods, the operation of private interest, making use of plausible pretences to cover its own selfish objects ; but we have not room here to enlarge on this point. Our present concern is with the economical, rather than the legal or political aspects of the subject.

In our former article we succinctly pointed out the evils of the existing system. Before proceeding to indicate the remedies, which depend upon State legislation and local usage, we will advert very briefly to the suggested advantages of a paper money currency, as the plan now in use in this country. It will appear, we think, that these supposed advantages are entirely imaginary, and that the system is, in fact, open to attack on what are commonly regarded as its strongest points.

The argument now most earnestly insisted on in support of the present banking system is its influence on credit. Its advocates commence by emphatic and exaggerated statements of the benefits resulting to individuals and nations from the greatest possible extension of credit ; and assuming, in the next place, without proof, that the present banking system is the one most likely to effect this object ; they pronounce it the *credit system*, and declare that any attempt to reform its abuses is neither more nor less than a *war upon credit*. This will be admitted, we suppose, to be a correct statement, in a few words, of the sum and substance of the speeches, pamphlets, and essays of the principal supporters of the system from Webster and Legare in Congress, down to the common every-day writers for the newspaper press. It is hardly necessary to say to those who have well considered the subject, that every step in this argument is full of sophistry, and founded in considerations not only erroneous, but directly the reverse of the truth.

It is not true, in the first place, that either individuals or nations are benefited by the greatest possible extension of credit. Credit may be pushed to an excess, which generates extravagance and wild

speculation; results, that carry with them, as we know too well by experience in this country, a train of the most disastrous consequences. It is not true, as is often alleged in connexion with this argument, that the great prosperity of the United States has been owing to the application of the principle of credit. Labor is the only ultimate source of the wealth, and, we may add, the *welfare* of nations. Steady, resolute, persevering, indefatigable, self-denying labor, performed for the first time in the history of the world, for their own account by the whole population of a great country, has been the secret of our success. The foundations of our national prosperity were laid; the superstructure raised in all its principal parts, and the whole machinery of the system put into full operation, before the principle of credit, as now understood, was practically introduced among us; for this is only within the last thirty or forty years. The favorite topics of our fathers were not the advantages of getting credit, but of industry, economy, temperance, and freedom from debt. Poor Richard's almanac, their manual of practical conduct, and the work which is said to have formed our national character, is merely a sermon from this text. In fact, though credit, absolutely viewed, may be considered as a good thing; every transaction, that brings it into operation, involves another element of a directly opposite character. There are two parties to all such transactions, and if one of them gives credit, the other gets into debt. Now *debt*, absolutely viewed, is a bad thing, and it is only by comparing the results of the operation, as viewed under both these aspects, that we can decide whether it will prove beneficial or otherwise. Credit, therefore, is far from being an unmixed good. We may have too much of it; and the only way of assuring ourselves that we are within the proper limits, is to follow nature. Where a man feels sufficient confidence in the character and solvency of another, to entrust him with real capital, the transaction will probably prove beneficial to both par-

ties, since few prudent and industrious persons will get into debt under such circumstances, without a reasonable prospect of some corresponding future advantage. But where credit is artificially stimulated by law—where companies are incorporated for the express purpose of making loans, and virtually supplied by the state with unlimited amounts of fictitious capital to be employed in this way, it is apparent that the principle will and must be pushed to a ruinous excess; that loans will be made to persons in whose hands there was no sufficient reason to believe that the funds would be safe; that debts will be contracted by men who have no reasonable prospect of being able to pay the interest, much less the principal; and that the general results will be disastrous to all the parties concerned, and to the community at large.

But this is not the only view in this argument, nor the one most directly fatal to its conclusion. After exaggerating the advantages of the greatest possible extension of credit, it next assumes, as we remarked before, entirely without proof, that the present banking system is highly favorable to this object; that it is, in one word, *the credit system*, and that any attempt to reform or alter it is a *war upon credit*. Now, with all due respect to the high authorities on which this unproved assumption is promulgated as gospel truth, we must beg leave to enter our very decided protest against it. We conceive that the present banking system might be called with much more propriety the *anti-credit system*. It is no doubt true that this system does bring about, by the law of its nature, certain regularly recurring periods of limited duration, in which loans of something that passes at the time for money, though at a much depreciated value, are distributed with great freedom and very little discretion among the members of a single class of the community. But it is equally certain that it also brings with it other periods, nor less regularly recurring, and of much longer duration, in which men of the best character and of known solvency find it difficult, some-

times impossible, to obtain, even at the most ruinous rates of interest, the most moderate accommodations; when the objects, let us rather say the *victims*, of the preceding period of profusion are compelled, with relentless severity, to pay up in highly appreciated currency. We have said that these periods of scarcity are of longer duration than those of plenty. We suppose that we are quite safe in the remark that where money is, to use the jargon of the exchange, *easy* one month in our markets, it is *tight* three. How many years of this pecuniary famine would be required to eat up the ill-gotten and too often imaginary fruits of the one year of fatal prodigality? Let the "business men" of our principal cities, who are at this moment groaning under the *peine forte et dure* of one of the severest of these *pressures*, supply the answer. We fear that they are even worse off than the people of Egypt in old times, where the years of plenty were equal in number to those of famine; and even there the unfortunate sufferers were compelled to sacrifice first their chattels, then their lands, and finally their liberty, for the bare means of subsistence. This is too true an emblem of the condition of our "business men," who have degenerated, under the operation of this pernicious *system*, from the "saucy merchants" of other days into the anxious, care-worn, bond-slaves of banks and brokers. Is this a *credit system*, that deals out loans with thoughtless profusion, when money is at three per cent. a year, to demand them back with more than Shylock sternness, when it is at three per cent. a month? We maintain that such a system is ruinous, equally under both the aspects, not merely to good morals and to all regular business, but to *credit* in any proper acceptation of the term. By a *credit system* we understand a state of things in which all the citizens, without distinction of class or profession, can obtain such loans as they may want, with a facility exactly proportional to the goodness of their character and their solvency. A condition of society in which at one time men of little or no character or

property can obtain loans to almost any amount, and at another, the most upright and opulent merchants are compelled to become bankrupt from the utter impossibility of obtaining very moderate accommodations, is, as we said before, not a *credit*, but an *anti-credit* system.

To a proper credit system, or in more correct and intelligible language, to a sound and healthy state of credit, a state in which it shall receive all the extension that is desirable or useful and no more, two things are necessary. The first is a good and well administered government, which gives to the lender the moral assurance that, if he place his property in the hands of his neighbor on certain conditions, it will not be kept from him in violation of the contract by force or fraud. The other is a sound and uniform condition of the currency, which gives to both the parties to such contracts the assurance, that they will not be called upon to execute them at a loss of half the amount at stake. The former of these requisites is enjoyed to the fullest extent in this country; the latter, unfortunately, has, for many years past, been wanting, in consequence of the unsteady and fluctuating character, impressed upon this currency by the present banking system. It is, therefore, by a curious perversion of language, that this very system, which in this country is the *only obstacle* to a perfectly healthy state of credit, should have received from its friends the appellation of the credit system, and that the attempts to reform it should have been called a *war upon credit*. A thorough reform of the present condition of the currency is absolutely necessary to the existence of anything like a sound and healthy state of credit in this country; and the measures proposed for this purpose by the General Government, whether well or ill advised, are a war carried on, not against credit, but against its bitterest, and in this country only enemy, an *unsteady measure of value*.

The argument in favor of the present banking system, drawn from its supposed favorable influence

upon credit, is therefore wholly baseless. The one originally relied upon by the friends of paper money, and which is still occasionally, though somewhat less frequently urged, if at first view a little more plausible, will be found on examination to be equally untenable. This is the supposed *economy* of the system. Real capital, employed as a circulating medium, is withdrawn from any other active investment. If an article not possessing the character of real capital, and not susceptible of any other employment, can be substituted for the one previously used in this way, there is a proper equivalent to the returns upon the latter, when invested in some active business. If the circulating medium of this country consisted of a hundred million dollars in gold and silver, then, by substituting an equal sum in paper, and employing the specie in commerce or manufactures, the community would obtain an annual profit equal to the ordinary returns upon a capital of that amount, and about ten million dollars. This is the argument, and the only one originally employed by Adam Smith in support of a paper currency. Though less insisted on now than it was formerly, it is still reproduced from time to time. We have seen it figuring in the editorial discussions of the Independent Treasury Bill by the newspapers of this city. They assure us that if we employ a metallic instead of a paper currency, we must pay to somebody the interest upon at least a hundred million dollars, in order to supply ourselves with the necessary specie. The agreement of these not very harmonious organs of the bank party in support of this opinion might, perhaps, be thought to furnish *primâ facie* evidence of its correctness. In reality the statement absolutely taken is, no doubt, true. If we employ specie to the value of a hundred million dollars as currency, we must of course devote six million dollars worth of the annual labor of the community to the purpose of keeping up the supply. If we could substitute a paper currency of equal nominal amount, with no other cost than that of the

rags employed in making it, we should realize an annual profit equal to the whole ordinary returns upon this sum. On the other hand, however, if the machinery necessary for bringing these rags into the market in the form of paper money, be of an expensive character, it is obvious that the annual charge, thus imposed upon the community, must be taken into the account, as the offset to the supposed economy of the substitution; and it may, perhaps, be found, on striking a balance, that our pretended gain will turn out a heavy loss.

The banking institutions of the country comprise the machinery employed for bringing rags into the market in the form of paper money, and the difference between the annual income of these institutions and the amount of their annual dividends, constitutes, of course, an accurate measure of their expenses. This is the cost to the community of a paper currency; and it will be found, on comparison, to be much greater than that of a metallic one of equal nominal amount. This is easily seen by a very simple calculation upon the sums given in the latest statistical accounts. The total amount of the whole banking capital of the United States is calculated at about three hundred millions; and it is probably safe to assume that the average amount of the loans and discounts of all the banks is equal to twice the amount of their capital. On this supposition, the directors of the banks receive annually the interest on six hundred million dollars, which, at the usual rate of bank interest, nearly six and a half per cent., gives about thirteen per cent. upon their actual capital of three hundred millions. Now the average amount of the dividends on bank stock does not exceed six per cent. The difference between the thirteen per cent. upon their whole capital thus received by the directors of the banks, and the six per cent. which they divide among their stockholders, if honestly accounted for, must, of course, be absorbed, in one way or another, by the expenses of these institutions, and is the exact measure of the

actual cost to the community of a paper currency. The annual expense of the paper currency now existing in the country, estimated at seven per cent. upon three hundred million dollars, would amount to twenty-one million dollars. The nominal amount of this currency is estimated at a hundred and fifty million dollars. The annual charge of a metallic currency of this same nominal amount at six per cent., would be nine millions, and the net annual loss, resulting from the substitution of paper, is, of course, twelve millions.

To make the calculation still clearer, although it is too simple to require much elucidation, we set it down in figures.*

Total amount of banking capital in the U. S.,	\$ 300,000,000
Loans and discounts, taken at twice the capital,	600,000,000
Circulations, - - - - -	150,000,000
Interest received by the banks on \$ 600,000,000, at six and a half per cent., - - - - -	39,000,000
Deduct dividends on \$ 300,000,000, at six per cent.,	18,000,000
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Cost of a paper currency of \$ 150,000,000,	21,000,000
Deduct the cost of a metallic currency of equal amount at six per cent., - - - - -	9,000,000
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Net annual loss to the community by the substitution, \$ 12,000,000

In one case, the amount of labor required for the production of articles of the value of nine millions only, is employed in procuring a circulating medium; in the other, the amount required for the production of articles of the value of twenty-one millions is employed for the same purpose; since every dollar paid into the banks as interest upon a loan, represents the amount of labor required to produce an article worth a dollar, and unless it is paid out again to one of the stockholders, is a total loss to the community for every purpose, except that of keeping in existence a paper currency. The amount thus levied upon the community is advanced in either case by the merchant,

* The tables here used are taken from the letter of the Secretary of the Treasury of January 8th, 1838, and may be found in that excellent publication, the American Almanac for 1839, p. 117.

who brings into the market the specie or the bank notes, and is felt by the people in the form of a diminution of the productiveness of labor in general, or, in a shorter phrase, of a tax on labor.

The view here taken, far from being too favorable to a metallic currency, errs on the other side. For although for the sake of using round numbers, we take the amount of the loans and discounts of the banks a little higher than they are given in the tables employed, where they are stated at only five hundred and twenty-five millions instead of six hundred, we presume that twice the capital is not too high for an average. On the other hand, we have omitted to take into account the specie kept on hand, and of course unproductive, in the vaults of banks. This is estimated in the tables at about forty millions, the interest of which, nearly two and a half millions, must be added to the amount lost by the substitution of paper for specie.

We have also, in making this calculation, assumed that the two currencies would be of equal nominal amount, which is, of course, the proper method for testing the principle. But in practice a metallic currency would be always considerably smaller in nominal amount than a paper one. If one hundred and fifty millions in bank notes, together with the ten or fifteen millions of silver now in circulation as change, be sufficient for the wants of the country, it cannot be doubted that a hundred millions in specie would answer every purpose. This is accordingly the amount assumed as necessary by the newspapers of this city in the interest of the banks. Of this sum forty millions are already on hand in the vaults of the banks, where they are just as expensive to the community, — as if they were in circulation, — and at least ten are in the hands of the people in the form of the smaller silver coins. Both these items were omitted in our calculation. Taking them into view, the actual expense to the country of an exclusively metallic currency, in addition to what we now pay for specie,

would be only the interest on about fifty millions, or three millions annually, while the charge of sustaining our present bank note system remains, as we stated before, twenty-one millions annually. The actual loss, in practice, on the substitution of paper for specie is, therefore, about eighteen million dollars a year, the equivalent of which in hard work must be drawn out of the *huge paws* of the laboring classes of the community.*

* While preparing the above remarks on the *economy* of our present paper money as compared with specie, we find an article on the same subject in the *Charleston Mercury*, one of the ablest journals in the country, and particularly distinguished for its clear and correct views on economical questions. We are happy to find that the writer coincides with us in the general principle. His estimate of the cost of our present currency is lower than ours, but is still high enough to refute completely the argument from economy in favor of paper money. We copy the article as a powerful and satisfactory confirmation from a highly respectable authority of the view given in the text. This view, so far as we are informed, has not before been stated in print. Professor Tucker, in his late work on banking, states the loss to the community of the interest on the specie currency as an argument in favor of the substitution of paper. This is the old view of Adam Smith. In another part of his work the Professor makes an estimate of the expenses of our present banking system, which he estimates, if we recollect rightly, at five per cent. on the capital, or about fifteen millions. The cost of a specie currency, on the much too high estimate given in the text, is only nine. It does not seem to have occurred to the Professor, that the expense of paper money should be considered as an offset to that of specie, and the two estimates are not brought into comparison.

"ECONOMY OF BANKS.—If the whole circulating medium of the United States consisted of specie only, the annual expense for the use of it would be a sum equal to the income it would yield if employed in the usual business of the country, besides the wear and tear; because it merely performs the functions of a common measure of value, and of an instrument for exchanging and circulating commodities, &c. &c. producing nothing more, so employed, than the yard sticks and weights used to ascertain the length and ponderosity of such commodities. Thus, suppose the amount of circulation to be \$120,000,000: the average rate of profits on the productive pursuits of the country, to be ten per cent., and the wear and tear of coin, one eighth of one per cent., the account must stand thus: lost profits on one hundred and twenty millions of dollars, twelve millions, and wear and tear one hundred and fifty thousand dollars; making an aggregate annual charge of \$12,150,000 for the use of a pure metallic currency.

So much for the supposed *economy* of the paper money system; the only advantage which has ever been represented with any degree of plausibility as belonging to it. But without enlarging further on

“Now, could the circulation of the property and commodities of the country be effected as well without the intervention of coin, by direct exchange or barter, or by the use of some instrument costing nothing, then one hundred and twenty millions of dollars, being released from its barren function of mere currency, would be invested as capital, in agriculture, commerce, manufactures, navigation, productive rail-roads and canals, &c., yielding upon the data assumed a clear annual gain of \$ 12,150,000.

“The advocates of the present banking system insist that such a costless medium is found in bank notes, to the extent of their issue beyond the specie basis. Thus, one hundred and twenty millions of dollars of bank notes may safely be issued on a basis of forty millions of dollars, setting free eighty millions of dollars, besides the saving of wear and tear on the amount at rest in their vaults.

“Now, having stated these positions fairly, I would remark that the superior economy of such a paper medium would be manifest, if the cost to the community of feeding the great bank hydra was merely the loss on the dead capital of forty millions of dollars in their vaults; but unfortunately for their statement, there is an important element of the estimate entirely overlooked or omitted, viz. the annual expense of working the machinery of eight hundred banks, for palaces, furniture, stationary, plates, presidents, cashiers, tellers, clerks, runners, retainers, and understrappers innumerable, making not less than ten thousand dollars for each “monster,” amounting to eight and a half millions of dollars, and exceeding the amount saved by the use of promises, instead of substances, by five hundred thousand dollars.

“These remarks embrace a view of the direct cost only of the two kinds of currency — coin and paper, and are predicated on the assumption that in either case there should be no redundancy. But if we glance for a moment at the consequential fluctuations, wild and disastrous speculations, extravagance, luxury, and indirect vagrancy of the one, and the stability, steady industry and economy of the other, the balance will be found overwhelming against the boasted ‘American credit system.’”

I say nothing here of the anti-republican inequality, undue favoritism, disgusting and degrading subserviency, fraud, deceit, &c. &c. necessarily incident to and inseparable from the paper system; and they are every day more and more glaringly exhibited to the public view. That chapter may be opened hereafter; for the present I conclude by remarking, that I believe the system was conceived and originated in fraud, has grown up in fraud to a precocious and monstrous maturity, and must end in fraud and corruption, working inevitably great detriment to the rights, interests, morals, and liberties of the country.

this part of the subject, it is time for us to advert to the measures depending on State legislation or local usage, that have been, or may be suggested in the way of relief from the various and multiplied evils resulting from the present state of the currency. We shall first notice three or four, which may be classed under the head of *Palliatives*, and then point out what we consider as the final and effectual *Remedy*.

1. Among those of the former character, is one resting on the local usage of this city, and commonly known as the *Suffolk Bank System*. The original intention was probably to secure to the notes of the Boston banks their proper share in the circulation of the city. Country banks are, as such, likely to be managed with somewhat less discretion than those of large cities, and of course to issue notes more freely. Independently of this circumstance, the mere fact of their distance from the centre of business would probably in some degree diminish their credit at that point, where, being at a discount, they would, of course, by the ordinary law that regulates all sorts of currency, fill the channels of circulation and supersede the notes of the city banks. In order to prevent these results, an arrangement has been agreed upon between the city and country banks, by the effect of which the latter provide for the redemption of their notes in the city, each of them constantly keeping on deposit a certain amount of funds in one of the Boston banks. The greater part of the city banks are associated together for the purpose of sustaining this arrangement; and if any country bank refuse to come into it, its notes are immediately returned as fast as they accumulate in the city, with a demand for payment in specie. The country banks of course find it necessary to make the deposit required. The Suffolk Bank in Boston is the one which has been employed as the depository or place of redemption, and has in consequence given its name to the system.

This system has, in practice, worked extremely

well, and produced all the good effects that could reasonably have been expected to result from it. It secures the city circulation to the Boston Banks, and puts an effectual check upon the occasional indiscretions of the country. This is all that it does, or can do. It claims no power of counteracting the essential vices of the paper money system; but, on the contrary, by checking some of its minor inconveniences, tends rather to give it strength and stability. Hence the Suffolk plan belongs to the class of *Palliatives* where we have placed it; and it is with some surprise that we have lately seen it represented by one of the ablest and most judicious economical writers of this neighborhood;* one who is perfectly aware of the true character and essential vices of the present banking system, as a complete remedy. It is quite apparent that these vices do not reside in the occasional abuses or indiscretions of particular banks, but in the regular operation of the whole system. Any plan, which professes morally to correct minor aberrations, gives, as we just now remarked, new strength to the system, and of course tends to perpetuate, instead of preventing the real difficulty.

2. Another plan belonging to the same class of *Palliatives*, and nearly similar in its character to the *Suffolk Bank System*, is the *New York Safety Fund System*. It is not, however, like the former, a mere local usage, but is prescribed by a law of the State, adopted at the suggestion of the present chief magistrate of the Union, when governor of New York. By the effect of this law the chartered banks are required to contribute a certain sum, each in proportion to its capital, to a fund deposited in the State Treasury, which is to be applied to the indemnification of persons who may suffer losses by the failure of any one

* We refer particularly to one of a series of articles signed *Investigator*, and published in the Boston Daily Advertiser. The writer, after a very able and satisfactory exposition of the evils of the present banking system, concluded by indicating the Suffolk Bank alone as a sufficient and effectual remedy.

of the banks. It is apparent that this arrangement, though well contrived for the purpose of securing the public against the injury that might result from the occasional mismanagement of a bank, has no bearing whatever upon the essential vices of the system, and of course no power to diminish their influence. On the contrary, by removing or correcting some of the sensible practical inconveniences, it rather tends, like the Suffolk Bank plan, to confirm and perpetuate the substantial evils under which the community is suffering.

3. A third plan, which, if considered as exercising a favorable influence on the currency, must be classed with the *Palliatives*, since, like the others that have been mentioned, it has no operation on the essential vices of the system, is the *New York General Banking Law*. It is doubted, however, by many, whether this plan will not in practice prove, on the whole, injurious, rather than beneficial.

By this law, any one or more persons, possessing capital to the amount of one hundred thousand dollars, may carry on the business of banking, on filing a certificate of the intention so to do, in the office of the Secretary of State, and complying with certain other forms, prescribed by this act. If the bank intend to issue notes, it must deposit certificates of stock or mortgages on real estate with the comptroller to the amount proposed. The notes are then furnished to the bank by the comptroller, bearing his own signature, and thus carrying on their face the actual guarantee of the faith of the State. They are made redeemable in specie in the usual way. If on being presented at the bank they are not paid in specie, they may be protested and sent to the comptroller, who, after ten days notice to the bank, shall sell at auction the securities in his hands to redeem the notes.

These are the essential features of the act. It may be regarded under two aspects, either as a plan for opening the business of banking to free competition,

or as a method of improving and reforming the state of the currency. It is not necessary to our present purpose to consider it under the former point of view; but we may remark *en passant*, that a free competition, from which all are excluded who have not the command of a hundred thousand dollars, is but little better than a mockery. In this Commonwealth, the number of persons or companies, who would be permitted to enter the lists, would probably not be greater than the present number of chartered banks.

Considered as a method of reforming the currency, this plan is obnoxious to the same remark which we have made upon the two others previously adverted to. It has no bearing whatever upon the essential vice of the present system, *unsteadiness in the measure of value*. On the contrary, as there is no limitation either to the amount of capital that may be invested in the associations contemplated by the act, or to the extent of their business, there will be a still stronger tendency to an alternate expansion and contraction of the currency, than there is at present. The only point, in which the act would operate favorably on the currency, is that of the greater security of the holder of notes resulting from the power of recurring to the stocks deposited with the comptroller, in the event of a failure to pay specie by the bank. But the comparative insecurity of the holders of notes is not one of the essential vices of the existing system, though certainly an evil of considerable magnitude. A plan of reform which guards against it, without touching the more deeply seated causes of the mischief is injurious, rather than useful in its general operation, because it tends to strengthen and thus perpetuate a substantially bad system. In this respect the *New York General Banking Law* stands upon the same footing with the *Suffolk Bank* and *Safety Fund Systems*. Of these three methods for accomplishing the same partial object, the *Suffolk Bank* plan appears to us to be best, because it prevents the mischief, which the others only propose to remedy.

4. There is one more plan for reforming the present state of the currency, which, though it must be classed with *Palliatives*, since it does not strike directly at the principle of the evils we suffer, would, nevertheless, if adopted to a sufficient extent, afford an effectual practical remedy; we mean *the suppression of small notes*. The money which passes from hand to hand among the people consists, at present, almost wholly of notes for sums under twenty dollars. If a law were passed suppressing all notes under twenty dollars, the actual currency of the country would become metallic, and would possess, of course, the steadiness of value that belongs to the precious metals. The occasional employment of bank notes for sums over twenty dollars in large payments, like the employment of bills of exchange for payments in distant cities, would have no injurious effect upon the state of the circulating medium.

The advantages which would result from the suppression of small notes, are too obvious to have escaped the attention of economists or of governments. In England there are no bank notes under five pounds sterling, nor in France under five hundred francs. These sums are equivalent respectively to about twenty or a hundred dollars, and seem to have been regarded by these enlightened nations as the limits below which the paper currency could not be tolerated with safety. A suppression to the same extent has been repeatedly and strenuously recommended in this country by the principal members of the present and late administrations of the General Government. Their views in this respect have been at various times sanctioned by almost all the most conspicuous statesmen in and out of Congress without distinction of political party. Mr. Webster and Mr. Biddle have expressed their aversion to small notes, not less distinctly than Mr. Benton, who has been in Congress the leading advocate of this salutary reform. Many of the States have passed laws in conformity with this idea, and as far as experience had gone with the best

results. Unfortunately during the late suspension of payments, it was found or supposed to be necessary to break over this restriction, as well as the legal and moral obligation, which required the banks to redeem their notes in specie; and the reforms, which had previously been making rapid progress, and promised, at no distant time, to become general throughout the Union, have been temporarily checked. There seems in fact to be in theory no difference of opinion about the propriety of the measure. It is true that the banks, which make rather more profit upon this part of their circulation than upon any other, are generally opposed to the reform in question, and are sustained in their opposition by some journals of good reputation; but they are unable to produce any arguments of weight in support of their opinions. The only tangible objection which we have seen urged is, that the banks of one State are prohibited from issuing small notes, the only result will be to substitute for them the small notes of the banks of other States, where the emission of them is permitted. But this inconvenience might easily be prevented by proper legislation, and after the advantage of the reform had once been distinctly exhibited in practice in one or more of the States, they would become so apparent, that the example would be very soon imitated by all the others.

The *suppression of small notes* is therefore the practical measure, of which the immediate adoption is imperiously demanded by a just regard for the welfare of the country, as the first step in an effectual reform of the present abuses of the currency. While it would be in practice a complete remedy for the evil, it is one of a safe and probably innocent character. It violates no law or charter; interferes with no vested right, and might be introduced so gradually as not even to shock materially any existing interest. We remark with great pleasure, that Governor Polk in his first message to the Legislature of Tennessee, recommends the adoption of this measure; and we trust

that his advice will prevail in the councils of that distinguished, and now politically regenerated State. We also venture to anticipate the early proposal and adoption of a similar measure, as one of the first fruits of the new and more auspicious era, which is shortly to open in the political history of our own venerable Commonwealth. Of this, a few words more in the sequel.*

* We consider the whole question of a practical reform of the currency as virtually involved in that of the *suppression of small notes*. This point is therefore one of the most essential in the discussion, and we deem it of importance to confirm the view that we have taken of it by the higher authority of Mr. Gallatin. The following are a part of his remarks upon the subject in his essay on the currency, originally published in the American Quarterly Review.

"We perceive but two means of enlarging the circulating metallic currency: 1st, the suppression of small notes; 2d, the measures necessary to bring again gold into circulation.

"The first measure is that which, after long experience, a most deliberate investigation, and, notwithstanding a strenuous opposition by the parties interested, has been finally adopted and persevered in by the Government of Great Britain. By the suppression of all notes of a denomination less than £5 sterling, in England, Wales, and Ireland, the amount of the circulating metallic currency has become equal to that of bank notes of every description. That metallic currency consists of eight millions sterling in silver, which is receivable only in payments not exceeding forty shillings, and of twenty-two millions sterling in gold. This measure has given a better security against fluctuations in the currency, and a suspension of specie payments, than had been enjoyed during the thirty preceding years. In France, where the Bank of France is alone authorized to issue bank notes, and none of a denomination under five hundred francs, its circulation hardly ever reaches ten millions sterling, or about one tenth part of the currency of the country. In the United States, all the banks issue notes of five dollars. The States of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia, and perhaps some others, have forbidden the issue of notes of a lower denomination, to the great convenience of the community, and without experiencing any of the evils which had been predicted. We have seen, in Pennsylvania, the chasm occasioned by that suppression instantaneously filled by silver, without the least diminution in the amount of currency. We cannot but earnestly wish, that the other States may adopt a similar measure, and put an end to the circulation of the one, two, and three dollar notes, which is of no utility but to the banks. Those small notes are, as a currency, exclusively local, and a public nuisance; and, in case of the failure of any bank, the loss arising from them falls most heavily on the poorest class of the com-

5. Being thus relieved by the suppression of small notes from most of the practical evils of the present system, the community will be able to go forward with freedom of mind and full deliberation to the adoption of the final and only real *Remedy*,—a complete and entire *separation of Bank and State*. Banks are in themselves good things, and government is in itself a good thing; but any alliance between them, as Mr. Biddle correctly remarked in his address to the Directors of the Pennsylvania Bank of the United States on accepting the charter, is *advantageous to neither party, injurious to both*. The immediate cause of the readiness, with which the community receive and circulate as money the promissory notes of banks, is the sort of public character given to these institutions by legislative charters, investing them with the right of issuing notes as an exclusive privilege, and subjecting them in turn to the supervision of the government. By these arrangements the faith of the government is virtually pledged to their solvency; and although this pledge is not redeemed,—though the government does not indemnify individuals who lose by their mismanagement and failure; it is nevertheless certain that the system produces its effect; that bank notes are considered as possessing a sort of public charac-

munity. We have no other data to estimate the proportion they bear to the whole amount of notes, than the returns of the banks of Massachusetts and Maine, subsequent to January, 1825; by which it appears, that, in those States, those small notes make one fifth of the whole paper currency. But we would wish to go farther than this, and in order to bring gold more generally into circulation, that all notes under the denomination of ten dollars might be suppressed. The five dollar notes of the Bank of the United States, constitute less than one sixth part of its circulation, and amount in value to two thirds of that of its ten dollar notes. From those data, taking into consideration the amount of currency of the States where the small notes do not circulate, and allowing that a portion of the five would be supplied by ten dollar notes, the reduction in the amount of the paper currency, arising from the suppression of the small notes, may be estimated at six, and that produced by the suppression of the five dollar notes at about seven millions. Both together would probably lessen the paper currency by one fifth, and substitute silver and gold coins in lieu thereof."

ter, and that for this reason they enjoy a credit, and obtain a currency, which they never could possess as promissory notes of a merely private description. Let this legislative sanction be withdrawn, and the fictitious credit now given to private bank notes will cease. They will no longer be regarded as money, but will fall where they properly belong, into the class of paper securities. As such they will continue to be employed for all the purposes to which they can properly be applied, but will no longer affect the steadiness of the measure of value, which will consist entirely of the precious metals. The notes of each individual and company will enjoy the credit, which may belong to them from his or their known character and solvency, and no more. The people, no longer deluded by a deceptive pledge of the public faith, which is held out but never kept, will judge for themselves, in each particular case, with the same facility with which they now decided upon the credit of bills of exchange, and with no more danger of mistake.

It is sometimes said, that if the currency consist entirely of the precious metals, there will be a deficiency of money, and their prices will suffer a great reduction. It seems to be supposed by some, that there can be no employment of paper securities, unless they constitute the measure of value and fill all the channels of business. Our apprehensions on this subject are of a directly opposite character. We should rather fear that, if all legislative bank charters and monopolies were withdrawn, — if every individual and association were to transact banking business and issue notes at discretion, there would be, for a time at least, a great overflow of paper securities. In other words, the business of banking would be for a time overdone, as those of manufacturing, building, importing, and others frequently are. In order to guard against this danger, it would be highly important, before commencing the system of a free competition in banking, to enforce in advance, as we have already suggested, a complete suppression of notes under

twenty dollars, and to maintain this suppression as a portion of the new system. With such a qualification there could be no danger either of an overflow or a deficiency of paper securities. Credit, no longer stimulated by injudicious laws, would exist; in other words, paper would be used, to the extent to which its use might be justified by actual character and capital. This is the utmost extent to which credit can exist or paper be used, with advantage either to individuals or the community. The notes of bankers and banking companies would stand, as they should, precisely on the same footing with those of all the other citizens.

No good reason can be given why this *separation of Bank and State* should not take place, or why banking companies should possess by law the privilege, which is denied to all others, of issuing their notes as currency. It is apparent, on the contrary, and is acknowledged by the intelligent economists on both sides of the water, that bankers, whether dealing individually or in companies, are precisely the last persons who ought to possess any control over the measure of value. The direct operation of a system which makes the measure of value consist of bank notes, is to render money plenty when debts are contracted, and scarce when they are paid; a result which, however beneficial to the bankers, is decidedly injurious to the community. We find, accordingly, that several late English writers of respectability, among whom may be mentioned Mr. Loyd, though deeming it necessary that the currency should consist of paper, and yet so fully satisfied that it ought not to be under the control of the banks, that they propose the constitution of a board of commissioners for the express purpose of issuing a paper money in a manner to be determined by law. All such paper must, of course, rest ultimately upon the faith of the Government, like the continental money and bills of credit of our revolutionary period. It is no better fitted than bank notes to constitute the measure of

value. The real business paper of a good and well administered government will always form the highest class of paper securities, and be very extensively used in remittances and payments; but it is not desirable on any account, that it should compose the circulating medium for the ordinary affairs of life; nor is it very probable, after the results of the previous experiments of this description, the people of this country will ever feel any very strong disposition to renew them.

It has *sometimes* been said on respectable authority, that *free banking would be free swindling*. This assertion seems to imply that banking is only another name for swindling,—an opinion in which we do not concur. Banking is in itself neither better nor worse than other kinds of business. The issuing of notes as currency is no part of the business of banking. How far such issues may safely be permitted, is a separate question to be determined on its own merits. We are of opinion, as we have intimated already, that in adopting the principle of free banking, it would be expedient, in the first instance at least, to connect it with, or rather to precede it by a prohibition of notes payable to bearer under twenty dollars. Whether this restriction might subsequently be withdrawn is a point, that should be left to the decision of experience.

Such, however, as we conceive the subject, are the measures which ought to be adopted for the reform of the present disorders of the currency.

I. *The suppression of bank notes* under twenty dollars.

II. *The separation of Bank and State*; by which we mean, as we have already explained it, the establishment of a perfectly free competition in the business of banking, and the abolition, as the present charters successively expire, of all the exclusive privileges that are now connected with this business, together with all the burdens or taxes, if any, which may have been imposed on banks, as a sort of equivalent for them.

But, it may be said, admitting that these measures would afford an appropriate and sufficient remedy, how can the States be prevailed upon to adopt them? What prospect is there that thirty independent sovereignties can be brought to concur in any scheme of policy; especially one, which is strongly resisted by powerful individual and corporate interests? If we have no hope of relief excepting in such a concurrence, is not our chance entirely desperate? Ought we not to abandon the idea of applying any remedy through State legislation, and throw ourselves at once upon the action of the General Government? Or, if this be inadmissible, were it not better, instead of perplexing ourselves with vain attempts at reform, to acquiesce calmly in the existing state of things as a necessary and irremediable evil?

These are questions which, on the present occasion, we are not called upon to consider at large. The first steps in the progress of reform are to ascertain with precision and correctness the nature of the disease, and the appropriate remedy. Whether the patient will probably consent to take the prescription, and, if not, what farther course should then be pursued, are other questions, which are perhaps better made the subjects of separate inquiry. There are, undoubtedly, some cases in which, as Tacitus says of the Roman Empire in his own time, the sufferer can neither endure the disease nor the remedy. Possibly ours may prove to be of this character; but, as at present advised, we see no particular reason to apprehend so unfortunate a result. We do not regard the concurrence of all the States in measures of acknowledged importance and utility as a thing by any means to be despaired of. On the contrary, our whole legislation on the great concerns of property and personal rights, which is under the control of the States, and is substantially the same throughout the Union, rests upon such a concurrence. Why should not the States, supposing the utility of the measure to be generally acknowledged, as it is, concur in the prohibition of small notes, as

easily as in requiring that deeds should be recorded, or debts paid? A very considerable progress had, in fact, been made, as we have already remarked, towards a concurrent legislation upon this subject previously to the financial crisis of 1837. Two thirds of the States, if we recollect rightly, had adopted laws of this description. The suspension of the banks brought with it naturally, if not necessarily, a temporary return of small notes; but the not very euphonious appellation of *shinplasters*, which they acquired during this period, seems to indicate that they are not in possession of any very high degree of public favor. No sooner is the crisis over, than we find the indexes of public opinion pointing again with unhesitating decision in the same direction. This is shown, among other indications, by the late message of Governor Polk of Tennessee, to which we have adverted. We have already expressed our hope that the Governor's recommendation might be adopted in that State, and that our own Commonwealth might be among the first to follow the example. We shall add a few words upon this topic as a conclusion to this already too long article.

Massachusetts has certainly not exhibited hitherto any very marvellous alacrity in the cause of bank reform. She was one of the earliest States to establish banks. She has multiplied them to a greater extent, exhibited more glaring cases of their abuse, and fallen more under their influence, than almost any other member of the Union. When two thirds of the States were taking measures to suppress the smaller notes, she refused to follow the example. But notwithstanding these unpropitious appearances, we think independently of the increasing influence of democratic principles upon her legislation to which we have adverted, that there are some circumstances in her economical situation, which will, at no distant period, satisfy her that a thorough reform of the present state of the currency is more necessary to her than to almost any other State; as, in fact, absolutely indispen-

sable to her existence as a flourishing and prosperous community. This remark brings us to the consideration of a topic to which we have not yet adverted in this or the preceding article, but which is perhaps the most interesting in the whole discussion,—we mean *the influence of the present banking system upon domestic industry, particularly in its great departments of manufactures and commerce.* We regret that the room which we now have left will allow us to bestow only a few words upon this topic, which well deserves, of itself, an entire article.

Massachusetts is a State where property depends almost wholly upon the flourishing condition of her navigation, commerce, the fisheries, and especially manufactures. Agriculture, in most other parts of the country the leading interest, is here of subordinate importance, and can only advance under the favorable influence of the other branches of industry to which we have adverted. Massachusetts has sought and obtained from the General Government special encouragements for all these great departments. Her navigation has been protected by discriminating duties; her fisheries by bounties; her commerce by constant negotiations and occasional wars; her manufactures by a tariff. Her constant and anxious solicitude upon all these subjects shows the intelligence, care, and zeal, with which she looks after her peculiar interests. If then it be true, as it certainly is, that the present banking system is a much larger and more efficient protection in our market to the industry of foreign countries, than all our discriminations, bounties, and tariffs are, or even can be to our own, we see no reason why Massachusetts should not after a while become aware of the fact; and having become aware of it, there cannot be a doubt that she will act upon her opinion with the decision and energy which she displays, whether for good or evil, in almost every enterprise which she undertakes.

That such is the fact is well known to all who are familiar with the subject, and may be made clear in a

very few words. The effect of the present banking system is to enlarge the nominal amount of the circulating medium, and of course to raise prices. The current price of all articles, foreign or domestic, in our market, is precisely so much higher than their natural price, which is the cost of production, as the whole currency has been expanded and depreciated by the introduction of paper money. At the same time this expanded and depreciated currency rests professedly upon a specie basis; and while the banks perform their obligations, is redeemable at par in gold and silver. Under these circumstances, a person residing in another country, where prices are at the natural standard, by sending his produce to this country, selling it at our high paper prices, and then exchanging his notes for specie, may realize a profit equal to the whole amount of the depreciation. If prices, for example, have doubled, as they probably have in this country in consequence of the introduction of bank notes as the common currency, the foreigner clears in the case supposed a profit of a hundred per cent. If the foreigner reside in a country where the currency is depreciated in the same way, but to a less extent than with us, his profit will be less, and will be only equal to the difference between the degrees of depreciation in the two countries. If prices, for example, have been a hundred per cent. in this country and only fifty in England by the use of paper money, the English producer will realize, under the circumstances supposed, a profit of only fifty per cent.; and so of other cases. This is probably about the real state of the comparative depreciation of the two currencies; that of England, in consequence of the prohibition of bank notes under five pounds, consisting in about equal portions of specie and paper, while ours is composed entirely of paper with the exception of the small amount of silver coin that circulates as *change*.

We find accordingly that the expanded periods of our currency regularly exhibit an immense impor-

tation of foreign articles. In 1836 it rose, including the cost of transportation, to about *two hundred million dollars*, against an export of but little over one hundred. The necessary consequence is a drain of specie from the banks, and a sudden contraction of the currency, with all the disastrous results to which we have already adverted. But beside these, the influence of the operation on our domestic industry, which we are now more particularly considering, adds another item of appalling magnitude to the long catalogue of evils. This inundation of foreign products, originally cheaper than our own, must be sold at auction, after the contraction of the currency, at greatly reduced prices, and the domestic producer finds himself driven entirely from the market. This result is experienced in every department of production. Even provisions, our great staple, have been of late years extensively imported. Duties on foreign importations, to the extent to which they ever have been or ever will be imposed in this country, are obviously entirely unequal to the task of checking a flood, which is swelled by such encouragements in the state of the currency. Their only effect is to raise the price of domestic products still higher, tax the consumer, and enrich the smuggler. The most decided superiority of enterprise and industry, in our manufacturers and other producers, is wasted in a vain struggle with insuperable difficulties, resulting from a general cause which no individual effort can possibly counteract. Nothing but a thorough and radical reform of the present state of the currency can cure this evil. Such a reform would furnish to our domestic products, and particularly our manufactures, a protection far more effectual than has ever been given to them by the highest duties. When the prices of our produce in our own market are brought down to the natural rates, which are of course about the same with those of similar articles of foreign production, the foreigner, who is burdened with the cost of transportation, and with the duties, whatever they may be, labors under a great

disadvantage, and is in fact excluded. Even without an impost duty he would find it impossible to compete, under such circumstances, with the activity and intelligence of the native producer. A reform of the currency would be equivalent, we do not say to the highest protecting duties, but to a complete prohibition of all foreign products that come into competition with our own.

Is it not high time then for the old Bay State, generally so shrewd in discerning her own interest, so energetic and zealous in seeking to promote it, to open her eyes to this state of things? The period for the last reduction of the duties under the compromise act is rapidly approaching. Intimations have been thrown out in quarters of high authority, that Massachusetts means to make an effort to obtain a continuance of them at a higher rate than the one fixed by that law. Probably the selection of a Representative in the next Congress from the Suffolk district was in some degree influenced by this consideration. But no one, who has observed with any care the signs of the times and the progress of opinion upon this subject, can fail to be satisfied that all such efforts must be ineffectual, and can produce no result but alienation and bad feeling among the States. Nor would they, as we have shown, if successful, secure the object desired. Were it not better then for Massachusetts, instead of wasting her strength in this ineffectual and every way useless struggle, to look the real difficulty in the face, and commence immediately with vigor a reform of the currency? A prohibition of all bank notes under twenty dollars would do the work, which no protecting tariff, no prohibition even, — for this the smuggler will evade, — can ever perform. While it relieves the community from the disastrous fluctuations to which we are now subjected, and furnishes a *steady and uniform measure of value*, it will also, by reducing prices to the natural standard, secure the domestic market to the domestic manufacturer, — take off a heavy tax from the consumer,

and be felt as a real and important benefit by every individual on whom it operates, excepting only the speculator and the smuggler.

We have thus, too succinctly for a satisfactory development of so important a subject, but as fully as the limits allotted to us would permit, touched successively in the present and a preceding article, on the several leading points on the great question of the currency. After stating distinctly the nature of the evils resulting from the existing system and the futility of its supposed advantages, we have examined the principal measures, whether dependent on Federal or State legislation, that have been suggested in the way of relief. Having shown the inefficiency or impolicy of other plans, we have expressed the opinion, that the suppression of small notes by the States and the adoption by the General Government of the Independent Treasury Bill, would constitute for practical purposes a thorough reform, to which the ultimate adoption of the great principle of the entire separation of Bank and State would give the necessary completeness and solidity. Far from looking with despair or even alarm upon the present financial embarrassments, we anticipate with great confidence an early recurrence to the measures just alluded to, and as a natural consequence, the only return of a sound and steady measure of value. The public opinion of the country has been declaring itself at every election for two years past with unequivocal distinctness, in favor of the measures suggested by the Federal administration. The voice of the people must and will be heard. The adoption of the Independent Treasury Bill may be expected from the deliberation of the Congress now in session. A general suppression of the smaller denominations of notes will require more time, but will proceed, we think, with some degree of rapidity, and in this part of the work we hope to see the old Bay State take an early and active lead. When we say *we hope*, we mean to intimate not a mere wish, but a strong confi-

dence founded in sufficient grounds to which we have alluded, namely, the constantly increasing influence of democratic principles in our legislation, and the deep interest which Massachusetts, as a manufacturing State, has in maintaining a *sound, uniform, and invariable measure of value*. Massachusetts is rarely blind to her own direct and immediate interest in economical matters, although on subjects of a strictly political character, she often appears to lose sight of it altogether. She has made no scruple, on some important points, of changing her course when the manner in which her economical interest was affected appeared to be changed. She resisted with vigor the encouragement of manufactures by the General Government; but after she had herself invested her capital in them to a great extent, she reconsidered her previous course, and has for some years past stood forward in Congress as the leading champion of protecting duties. By her legislation up to the present time she has given a greater development to the banking system than any other State. In this she probably pursued her instinct as a commercial and importing community. The recent rapid development of her manufactures, which, in connexion with the coasting trade and the fisheries, are to constitute hereafter her great sources of wealth and prosperity, has changed entirely the bearing of the banking system upon her economical interest. The expansion and depreciation of the currency, which stimulate importation, and may thus be regarded as desirable by a merely importing community, are fatal to domestic manufactures. Even our commerce, of which the coasting trade and the fisheries have become the principal branches, is now injured more than it is benefited by the present state of the currency. Massachusetts cannot be long insensible to these obvious and unquestionable truths. Having once become aware of them, she will undertake in earnest a reform of the banking system and carry it through, not by lean or large party majorities, but by unanimous votes, given on solid, economical,

Massachusetts grounds, without reference to personal or political divisions. Her voice thus uttered will be heard and respected throughout the Union, and will have great effect in determining the action of other States.

At the close of our preceding article we adverted to the then recent retirement of Mr. Biddle from the direction of the Pennsylvania Bank of the United States, and expressed the opinion, that he had been overrated as an economist and a man of business. The main argument at that time urged in support of a different sentiment and in proof of his capacity and talent, — for no one, we believe, has attempted to defend his conduct under a moral point of view, — was the apparent success with which the institution under his direction had been conducted up to the time of his retirement. This argument, such as it was, has been but too decisively refuted by events that have occurred since our former article was written. Within six months of the time when Mr. Biddle, on retiring from his place as President of the Bank, declared that he took leave of it with satisfaction because he left it in prosperous circumstances, and under the care of able directors; — within six months of this time, and without any new occurrence materially affecting the previously existing state of things, this great institution sunk, not without a mighty struggle, into the gulph of hopeless, helpless, irremediable bankruptcy. In her fall she has drawn after her two thirds of the other banks of the Union, and has given a second time the scandalous example of endeavoring to dissuade and even prevent banks, which were willing and able to perform their obligations, from pursuing the course dictated by honor and duty. Fortunately for the country, the banks of New York, and of New England, with the single disgraceful exception of Rhode Island, have resisted and will continue to resist her influence, and will form a rallying point for the reviving credit of the country.

Such has been the last result of the boasted wisdom

and success of the President of the United States Bank. If that Institution, in the course of its long, active, and strong career, has done no other good, it has at least served by its unprincipled manœuvres and its ultimate explosion to open the eyes of the community, more completely than any other event could possibly have done, to the dangerous character of the sort of overgrown moneyed monopoly, commonly intended under the name of a National Bank. We may apply to this occasion the language which the Roman poet Claudian employs, upon that of the fall of one of the powerful and profligate statesmen of his day. "I have sometimes doubted," says he, in his energetic verse, the effect of which is very inadequately given in a plain prose translation, "I have sometimes doubted, when I have seen the wicked in great power and flourishing like a green bay tree, whether the affairs of this world are in fact regulated, as we generally suppose, by a superintending power. The fall of Rufinus has relieved me from this unpleasant apprehension, and justified the gods. I now cease to complain that bad men sometimes reach the goal of their ambition. They rise to lofty heights, that they may sink with louder ruin to the gulphs below."

The reasons, publicly assigned by the friends and directors of the United States Bank for its failure, have been of the most extraordinary character. In the first statements that appeared upon the subject in the United States Gazette and the National Intelligencer, the event was attributed to the recent interruption of the opium trade with China! If the friends of the bank were serious in their explanation, they give us a strange idea of the extent of their intelligence;—if they intended it merely as grave mockery, we must say that we think the occasion a very ill-chosen one for the employment of that figure of speech. The Directors of the Bank, in a somewhat more formal and elaborate defence, abandon this ground, and attribute the explosion to a *premature re-*

sumption of payments after the former suspension.* But this view of the subject, as has been amply shown by the most judicious political writers of the day, is directly the reverse of the truth. The continued expansion of the business and issues of the bank, after the first suspension of payments, for the purpose of monopolizing the cotton trade, was the cause of the second. If Mr. Biddle, instead of undertaking to "carry the country through a dangerous crisis," by regulating the currency and monopolizing the principal branch of our commerce, had confined himself throughout his course to the management of his own institution, on the usual principles and with ordinary discretion, he might have been at this moment at the head of a specie-paying bank, as flourishing and prosperous as any bank, conducted on the system now in use in this country, ever can be. Instead of this he undertook, as the head of a national bank, to force a renewal of its charter by intimidating the President, corrupting the members of Congress, and crushing the people under the screw of a money pressure. As the head of a State bank, of which he had obtained the charter by corruption, he grasped at a power, which not even the Government of this or any other civilized country ever pretended to exercise, that of controlling and managing at discretion, to suit his own purpose, the whole business and exchanges

* Of the various explanations that have been given of the second suspension of payment by the United States Bank, the most entertaining, if not the most instructive, is that of *Girard* in his letters to a *Bank Director*, republished from a Philadelphia journal in the Boston Daily Advertiser. Girard honestly supposes that because we cannot eat and drink gold, it cannot possibly have intrinsic value; and quotes in illustration of his position, the high authority of Falstaff, who considered *honor* as a mere non-entity, because it would not *set a bone*. The illustration, it must be owned, is worthy of the argument. The manner in which *Girard* is *used up* by the *Bank Director*, one of the most intelligent merchants in the country, is, in the newspaper jargon, *a caution*. We take this occasion to remark that the discussions of the banking question in the Boston Daily Advertiser, both editorial and communicated, are among the ablest that have appeared in any quarter of the Union.

of a great community. In attempting to carry into effect this insane pretension, he has exhibited a desperate recklessness in the use of means, and an utter disregard for the ordinary rules of political economy and morals, of which there is hardly any previous example, except perhaps in the transactions that have consigned to an unenviable notoriety the name of John Law. His public explanations of his conduct, affectedly addressed to a distinguished statesman, who, as he knew at the time, did not approve his course, have never had even the merit of plausibility. When by systematic mismanagement he had reduced the institution entrusted to him to its last gasp, he deserted it at its utmost need with misrepresentation on his lips, and a large fortune in his coffers, bequeathing to his fellow citizens, as the only good result of the immense means that had been placed in his hands, the instruction afforded by a practical illustration of the worst possible abuses of the present banking system.

From the general tenor of the preceding remarks, it will be naturally concluded, that we heartily approve the determination of the banks of New England and New York to sustain specie payments in despite of the threats and allurements of the great regulator at Philadelphia. They will be upheld in this course by the community, and by resolutely persisting in it will, in some degree, relieve themselves from the unpopularity which for some years past has been gathering round the very name of *bank*. If in addition to this they will manfully consent to relinquish their odious privileges, surrender their charters, and consent to stand, in the exercise of a profession in itself as honorable and useful as any other, upon the same footing with the rest of their fellow citizens, they will entirely redeem their reputation. In so doing, they would merely anticipate a sacrifice which, with or without their consent, must and will be made in a very few years. We earnestly advise them, although we know beforehand that our counsel will be scornfully rejected, to take this course.

ART. V.—*The People's Own Book*. By F. DE LA MENNAIS. Translated from the French. By NATHANIEL GREENE. Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown. 1839. 18mo. pp. 188.

THE author of this book is one of the most remarkable men of the day, and one of the ablest and most vigorous writers in the French language. He was originally a Catholic priest, and early distinguished himself as one of the most ingenious and successful defenders of the Catholic Church. His *Essai sur l'Indifférence en Matière de Religion*, the first volume of which, if we recollect aright, was published in 1810, arrested the attention of the best thinkers and most distinguished literary men in France, and contributed not a little towards awakening an interest in the French for religious studies. Prior to the Revolution of July, 1830, he was generally regarded as a firm adherent to the policy of Rome, and as strongly opposed to the liberal or movement party. Since then, however, he has arranged himself on the side of the people, and exerted himself nobly in the cause of freedom both religious and political, for which he has had the high honor of being deposed by the Pope his spiritual sovereign.

The most remarkable feature in the Abbé de la Mennais' doctrine of liberty, is its connexion with religion. It is well known, that for some time the friends of freedom in Europe have been opposed to the Church, and in general to all religion. The privileged orders have also taken great pains to make it widely believed, that religion requires the support of existing abuses, and that no one can contend for social meliorations without falling into infidelity. This has created a false issue, one which M. de la Mennais rejects. He has endeavored, and with signal success, to show that there is no discrepancy between religion and liberty: nay, more, that Christianity offers a solid foundation for the broadest freedom, and that in order to be true

to its spirit, its friends must labor with all their might to restore to the people their rights, and to correct all social abuses. He proves that all men are equal before God, and therefore equal one to another. All men have one Father, and are therefore brethren, and ought to treat one another as brothers. This is the Christian law. This law is violated, whenever distinction of races is recognised; whenever one man is clothed with authority over his equals; whenever one man, or a number of men are invested with certain privileges, which are not shared equally by the whole. As this is the case everywhere, everywhere therefore is the Christian law violated. Everywhere therefore is there suffering, lamentation. The people everywhere groan and travail in pain, sighing to be delivered from their bondage into the glorious liberty of the sons of God. To this deliverance the people have a right. For it every Christian should contend; and they wrong their brethren, deny Christianity, and blaspheme God, who oppose it.

This is a new doctrine in France. It is something new since the days of the *philosophers*, to undertake to show that Christianity is the religion which favors not kings and privileged orders, but the people, the poor and needy, the wronged and down-trodden. Hitherto the few have made the many submit to the grievous burdens under which they groaned, by representing it as irreligious to attempt to remove them. They have enlisted the clergy on their side, and made religion, the very essence of which is justice and love, contribute to the support of oppression. They have deterred the pious from seeking to better their condition, by denouncing all who seek the melioration of society as infidels. But the Abbé has put a stop to this unhallowed proceeding. He has nobly vindicated religion and the people. He has turned the tables upon the people's masters, and denounced their masters, not the people, as infidels. He has enlisted religion on the side of freedom; recalled that long forgotten gospel, which was glad tidings to the poor, and dared

follow the example of Jesus whom the common people heard gladly, and whom the people's masters crucified between two thieves. He speaks out for freedom, the broadest freedom, not in the tones of the infidel scoffer, but in the name of God, Christ, and man, and with the authority of a prophet. His "Words of a Believer" has had no parallel since the days of Jeremiah. It is at once a prophecy, a curse, a hymn, fraught with deep, terrible, and joyful meaning. It is the doom of the tyrant, and the jubilee-shout of the oppressed. We know of no work in which the true spirit of Christianity is more faithfully represented. It proclaims, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven;" and woe unto the rich oppressor, the royal spoiler, the scribes and pharisees, hypocrites, who bind heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, while they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.

We need not say that we heartily sympathize with this doctrine, nor that we rejoice to find such a man as the Abbé de la Mennais sustaining with his fervid imagination, poetic fire, and unmatched logic, a doctrine to the promulgation and defence of which our own life has for many years been devoted. The view he takes we had also taken, and attempted to set forth; and that too when we seemed to ourselves to stand alone. We had seen the evils of society, the wrongs and outrages to which man is subject even in this land of equal rights, and we had ventured to demand reform, to labor to redress the grievances we saw; but our first and most uncompromising enemies we found in the church, among the clergy. Young and inexperienced then, we took it for granted that religion and social abuses were inseparable. We therefore rejected religion. Experience soon taught us that infidelity had no power to reform the world. We reëxamined religion, read again the New Testament, sought to comprehend the Christian movement, and came at length to the conclusion, that all the doctrines of Christianity harmonize with, or rather

rest for their support on, the "perfect law of liberty;" that Jesus came not merely to save the soul in another world, but to establish the reign of God on earth, in society not less than in the heart of the individual. Since then we have spoken in favor of reform as the believer, not in our own name, but in the name of God, of Christ, of religion; nor have we spoken in vain. Here and there a petty priest, bred up among the aristocracy, ignorant of everything pertaining to his profession, a priest after the order of Aaron, and not of the Most High God after the order of Melchisedec, may now and then cry out, in a waspish tone, infidel, and seek to prove that religion sanctions the degradation of the masses; but the American people are rapidly coming to the belief, that religion and liberty go hand in hand; that Jesus was the prophet of the people; that he blesses the suffering, and curses those who lord it over their brethren, either in Church or State.

The Abbé has been denounced, has been termed an enemy to social order, a disorganizer, a furious Jacobin, and the like; but what of that? Did ever yet a man stand up and speak the truth in clear and manly tones, plead in earnest for the down-trodden masses, and demand social reforms, without being denounced? He who will be true to the spirit of Jesus, who will follow the dictates of justice and love, shall always call forth the wrath of all who profit by existing abuses, who gain their wealth, their rank, and consideration from the toil and sweat and degradation of their brethren. He shall be called a seditious fellow, an agrarian, a disorganizer, a destructive; he shall be denounced as the enemy of God and man; the people shall be cautioned against listening to his words, and God shall be importuned to blast him with a celestial curse. But what of that? Regard it not. Woe only to him whom they who fatten on their brethren praise; woe only to the favorite of the aristocracy. He of whom they speak well should ask himself, "Lord, what sin hath thy servant committed,

that the wicked praise me?" The fact, that the privileged orders and their whippers-in have denounced the Abbé de la Mennais, is altogether in his favor, and should induce us to take up his works with the expectation of finding them remarkable for the timely utterance of great and living truths, — truths which are needed to regenerate society, and raise man to the possession of his heavenly inheritance.

The work before us is intended for the people, and is a brief and lucid statement of the rights and duties of man. Thomas Paine, the Deist, wrote the *Rights of Man*, an able production; but he adds nothing concerning man's duties. The clergy generally dwell on man's duties, but recognise not his rights. The Abbé, more Christian than either, treats both the *rights* and the *duties* of Man. It is useless to talk of men's duties before you recognise their rights. The Abbé therefore begins with a statement of man's rights, and this he does clearly and powerfully. Rights without duty are as if they were not. I can possess and enjoy my rights only by a faithful discharge of my duties. The exposition of rights is therefore justly followed by an exposition of duties.

The Abbé is a social reformer; he wishes to introduce the reign of justice and love into all the affairs of mankind. He does not believe that the numerous and weighty evils, which everywhere afflict the human race, are inevitable or irremediable. He does not believe that God has smitten the human race with a curse, and doomed it to universal and interminable wo. "The foolishness of man perverteth his way, and his heart fretteth against the Lord." God is love; a kind and munificent father, who makes ample provision for all his children. There is room on the earth for all, and there is enough produced for the comfort of all. But man perverts the order of God, and distributes His gifts without regard to justice or love. Shall it be always so?

"Is this vast multitude destined to run through the circle of the same sorrows forever? Has it nothing to hope from the

future? Upon all points of the route traced for it through the tide of time, shall there never escape from its bosom but the same heart-rending cry of distress? Is there any intrinsic or extrinsic fatal necessity which forbids all improvement of its condition, even to the end? Has our Heavenly Father willed that its sufferings should be eternal?

"Believe it not; the thought is blasphemy.

"The ways of God are ways of love. Men receive from him not the evils that afflict his poor creatures, but the blessings which he showers upon them in profusion.

"The softened air which animates them in spring is his breath, and the refreshing dews of summer descend from him.

"The few say; You are destined to misery from your birth; here below, your life is only suffering, and cannot be otherwise. But your sufferings, it is *they* who make them; and, because they have founded their own good upon the evil of the many, they would persuade these that their misery is irremediable, and that a simple effort to escape from it is an attempt equally criminal and insensate.

"Listen not to these deceitful words. The perfect felicity, to which every human being aspires, is not, it is true, of this world. You pass through it for the attainment of an end, for the fulfilment of duties, for the accomplishment of a work; repose is beyond, and now is the time for labor. This labor, however, according to the design of Him who imposes it, is not a continual chastisement to be undergone; but, so far as the effort which it necessitates will permit, a real though mingled good, a commencement of that joy the plenitude of which is its term.

"We are like the ploughman who sows in the spring, and gathers only in autumn. But has he no pleasure in his toil, and does not contentment germinate with hope in his furrows?

"The misery, which you are told is irremediable, it is on the contrary your duty to remedy. And since the obstacle is not in the laws of nature but in those of men, you can do it when you will; for they who erroneously suppose it to be their interest to hinder you,—what are they in your hands? What is their power? You are a hundred against one of them.

"How can you wonder that you have hitherto reaped so little of the fruit of your efforts? You have in your hands that which overturns, you have not in your hearts that which builds up and establishes. Justice has sometimes failed you, charity always.

"You had to defend your rights; — you, or the few in your

name, have often attacked the rights of others. You had to establish fraternity on the earth, the reign of God, the reign of love; — instead of that, each one has thought only of himself, and each one has had only his own proper interest in view. Hatred and envy have animated you. Search your hearts, and most of you will find there this secret thought: ‘I labor and suffer; — such an one is indolent and satiated with enjoyments. Why he, rather than I?’ And your greatest desire is to be in his place, to live like him, and act like him.

“Now, that would not be to destroy the evil, but to perpetuate it. The evil is in the injustice, and not in that it is this one rather than that one who profits by the injustice.

“Would you succeed? Accomplish good ends by good means. Confound not the power that is guided by justice and charity with brutal and ferocious violence.

“Would you succeed? Think of your brethren as much as of yourselves. Let their cause be your cause, their good your good, their evil your evil. See and feel not only for yourselves but for them. Let your indifference be transformed into profound sympathy, and your selfishness into generous devotion. You will then no longer remain isolated individuals, with whom a few who are better united will do what they please. You will become one, and when you are one you will be all; and who will then dare to interpose between you and the end you would attain? Isolated at present, because each one is occupied only with himself, with his own personal objects, you are made to oppose each other, and are mastered one by the other; when you shall have but one interest, one will, one common action, where is the power that can vanquish you?

“But comprehend well your task, or you will always fail.

“It is not in your power, individually, to better your destiny; for the mass will still continue in a state of equal suffering, and the world remain unchanged. Good and evil will still subsist in the same proportions; they will only be differently distributed, with regard to persons.”

“One will mount, another descend, and that will be all.

“The object is not to substitute one domination for another. Of what consequence is it who bears sway? All domination implies separate classes, consequently privileges, consequently conflicting interests, and, by virtue of the laws made by the privileged classes to secure the advantages of their superior position, the sacrifice of the many to the few. The people are as the manure of the earth where they take root.

"Behold your task, it is great. It is to form the universal family, to build the city of God, and, progressively, by unceasing effort, to realize his work in Humanity.

"When, loving each other like brothers, you mutually treat each other like brothers; when each one, seeking his own in the common good, is always ready to devote himself for all the members of the common family, who are in turn equally ready to devote themselves for him; then, most of the evils under the weight of which the human race now groans, will disappear, as the mists of morning are dissipated at the rising of the sun. And thus will God's will be accomplished,—for it is his will that love, gradually, and ever more and more intimately uniting the scattered elements of Humanity, and organizing them in one sole body, should cause them to become one as He himself is one." — pp. 29 – 37.

Here is the end at which the people should aim. But without a knowledge of the means necessary to gain it, their labors will be fruitless. Poor, weary travellers, desiring to reach a habitation for the night, must learn the way.

"Many speak to you only of your duties; others speak to you only of your rights. This is dangerously to separate what is in fact inseparable. You should know both your duties and your rights, that you may perform the one and defend the other. Otherwise you will never escape from your misery.

"Right and duty are like two palm-trees, which bear fruit only when growing side by side.

"Your right is you, your liberty, your life.

"Can it be that each one has not the right of living, the right of preserving that which he holds from God?

"Can it be that each one has not the right uninterruptedly to develop and employ his corporeal and spiritual faculties, to provide for his wants, to meliorate his condition, to rise more and more from the condition of the brute, and be ever approaching nearer to God?

"Can any one justly retain a poor human being in ignorance and in misery, in deprivation and abasement, when his efforts for escape are hurtful to none, or hurtful to those only, who found their well-being on iniquity by founding it on the misfortunes of others?

"The anger of these bad men, when the weak shake off the chains that bind them, is it not the anger of the ferocious

beast with its struggling victim? And their complaints, are they not the complaints of the vulture at the escape of its prey?

"Now, what is true of one is true of all. All ought to live, all ought to enjoy a lawful liberty of action, all ought to accomplish their end by an incessant development and perfecting of themselves. People ought then mutually to respect the rights of each other, and it is there where duty, justice, commences.

"But justice suffices not for the wants of Humanity. Each one under his own government does indeed fully enjoy his rights; but he remains isolated in the world, deprived of the succor and aid necessary to all. Does a man want bread, they would say; let him seek it; do I prevent him? I have taken nothing that belonged to him; each one to himself and each one for himself. They would repeat the words of Cain: 'Am I my brother's keeper?' The widow, the orphan, the sick, the feeble, would be abandoned;—no reciprocal support, no disinterested kindness;—everywhere selfishness and indifference;—no more of genuine relations, no more sharing of joys or sorrows, no more of common feeling. Life, retired to the centre of each heart, would be consumed in solitude, like a lamp in a tomb, which shines only upon the ruins of man; for a man without heart, compassion, sympathy, love,—what is he but a moving corpse?

"And since we have need of each other, for mutual support, like frail plants which are agitated and bent by the slightest winds,—since mankind would perish without a mutual communication of the goods individually possessed by virtue of the law of justice,—another law is necessary for the preservation of the human race; and that law is CHARITY. Charity, which forms a single living body of the scattered members of Humanity, is the consummation of duty, of which the foundation is justice.

"What would a man be, deprived of all liberty on earth,—who could neither go, nor come, nor act, but as another commanded or permitted? What would an entire people be, reduced to this condition? The savage beasts live happier and less degraded in the bosom of their forests.

"Moreover, what would a man be, selfishly concentrated within himself, neither directly injuring nor serving any one, dreaming only of himself, living only for himself? What can a people be, composed of unconnected individuals, where no one sympathizes with the misfortunes of others, nor feels himself obliged to aid or assist his fellow creatures; where

all interchange of services is but a calculation of interest ; where the groan of suffering, the lamentation of grief, the sob of distress, the cry of hunger, evaporate in the air as unmeaning sounds ; where no blessings are diffused by a secret impulsion of that love which alone knows what it is to possess, because it enjoys only that which it gives ?

“ This people, like the scattered grains abandoned upon the ground after the harvest has been gathered, would soon rot in the dirt, if it were not swept away by one of those tempests, which God has ordered occasionally to pass over the world for its purification.

“ It is right that frees, but it is duty that unites ; the union of the two is life, and their perfect union is perfect life.” — pp. 41 – 46.

These extracts show the spirit of the work, and suggest its principal doctrines. We should be glad, had we room, to make one other extract, exhibiting the manner in which the Abbé views religion, but must be content to refer to the book itself.

After what we have said, and the extracts we have made, we need not commend the book to our readers. It should be the pocket companion of every citizen of the Republic. It should lie on the table with the Bible, Pilgrim's Progress, and the Psalm Book ; and if the Board of Education wish to escape utter damnation, they will obtain leave to make it a volume in their Common School Library. It only remains for us to return our thanks to the translator for giving this work to our community in an English dress. He could not have employed more profitably the few hours for study he is able to snatch from his official duties. The work is a public benefit. And let us add, the translation is among our finest specimens of translation from the French. The translator has entered into the heart of his author, and sympathized entirely with his spirit ; and his version is beautiful and accurate, not unworthy of the original. We subjoin the note with which he introduces it.

“ The problem of man's existence, its conditions, the rights resulting from those conditions, and the duties involved, is now commanding the attention due to its importance. We see

Humanity, not as it originally came from the hands of its Creator, but such as the events of thousands of years have made it. We mistake habit for nature, and lose the power of distinguishing between the natural and the artificial. It is desirable to recover and to exercise this power; to analyze man, society; to ascertain the original condition of the one, and trace the history of the other; to ascertain the rights and duties of the one, and the origin, objects, and legitimate powers of the other. While seeking for light upon these and kindred questions, accident threw in my way "*Le Livre du Peuple*," by the celebrated Abbé de la Mennais, and it occurred to me that a translation might be beneficial to those whose minds are exercised on these subjects. Although more particularly addressed to the people of Europe, who are now suffering many evils and oppressions from which we have happily escaped, it nevertheless contains much that is applicable to every people in every age; and with the hope that it may be useful, if not in teaching rights, at least in exciting to the performance of duties, this volume is respectfully commended to his fellow citizens by — THE TRANSLATOR." — pp. 3–5.

EDITOR.

LITERARY NOTICES.

CHAT IN BOSTON BOOKSTORES.—No. I.

SCENE, — *a Bookseller's Shop in ——— St.* — PROF. PARTRIDGE is leaning on the counter, reading. — Enter REV. MR. NIGHTSHADE. — They salute one another. — After the usual inquiries have been made —

Rev. Mr. N. — I AM fortunate in meeting with you, for I am come to get a few books for Mrs. N., and the girls; and you are so much *au fait* as to new publications, that you will help me to choose.

Prof. P. — Willingly; the task will not be long; our shelves do not groan beneath a weight of solid bullion of late. But what sort of books do the ladies want?

Rev. Mr. N. — O ladies' reading of course, sentimental, lyrical, and ludicrous, Shakspeare, perhaps, — taste and the musical glasses, certainly.

Prof. P. — Well, here is a book that every one reads. It bears the promising title of *Hyperion*.

Rev. Mr. N. — A high-sounding title, what does it mean?

Prof. P. — I know not, unless to prepare the mind for floods of light. Hyperion, I think, was father to the sun and moon.

Rev. Mr. N. — And do both shine out at once from these pages? Mrs. Nightshade will be overwhelmed.

Prof. P. — Why, I confess, I do not like the book. It is such a journal as a man who reads a great deal makes from the scraps in his table-drawer. Yet it has not the sincerity or quiet touches which give interest to the real journals of very common persons. It is overloaded with prettinesses, many of which would tell well in conversation, but being rather strown over than woven into his narrative, deform where they should adorn. You cannot guess why the book was written, unless because the author were tired of reading these morceaux to himself, for there has been no fusion or fermentation to bring on the hour of utterance. Then to me the direct personal relation in which we are brought to the author is displeasing. Had he but idealized his tale, or put on the veil of poetry. But as it is, we are embarrassed by his extreme communicativeness, and wonder that a man, who seems in other respects to have a mind of delicate texture, could write a letter about his private life to a public, on which he had as yet established no claim.

Rev. Mr. N. — Some one should remind him of that truly English saying, "Heart-change in my affairs with friends, but head-change for the world."

Prof. P. — That saying may be misconstrued; yet, a natural sense of decorum says the same thing in different terms. Indeed, this book will not add to the reputation of its author, which stood so fair before its publication.

Rev. Mr. N. [*opening a Volume.*] — The style is somewhat peculiar, I think.

Prof. P. — Yes! he has spoiled his style by reading too much German. Nothing so dulls the sense of the simple strength, and terseness of the English idiom, as reading German till you get a habit of putting your thoughts into their modes.

Rev. Mr. N. — Do you not read German?

Prof. P. — Above all modern languages; for theirs is the living literature. But I keep on my guard. However, you don't wish now to hear criticisms on the German or English language. Here is your book, for you will take it, I suppose.

Rev. Mr. N. — Yes — if only to see if you have not carped and cavilled too much; for I have heard the book fairly spoken of.

Prof. P. — Well, it may please you; as I said before, there are pretty things in it. And if I have been ill-natured, I will make up for it by praising the book I hold in my hand.

Rev. Mr. N. [*reading.*] — "Phantasmion."

Prof. P. — By Coleridge's daughter, and the wife of Henry Nelson Coleridge, of whom you know somewhat.

Rev. Mr. N. — Yes; I have read his Introduction to the Greek Classics, and the Preface to the Table Talk.

Prof. P. — And do you not like him?

Rev. Mr. N. — Exceedingly. The Introduction left me most de-

sirous of more on the same subjects. I saw there that just and elegant taste, calm enthusiasm, and catholic judgment, which constitute the true critic. He showed himself rich in materials, but too manly for display.

Prof. P. — He owed a vast debt to his uncle for the aid he gave in forming such a character of mind. But he had made all he received (and which he acknowledges with the most affectionate reverence) his own, and uses it in his own way. The influence of Coleridge was that of true greatness, to unfold, not to alter, to form, not to re-form. He had, accordingly, innumerable disciples, but no school. In the work of his daughter, too, you see traces of his existence, but modified according to her nature. You see in what a genial atmosphere this plant must have been reared; for, to judge from the general tenor of English publications, she must be an exotic in England.

Rev. Mr. N. — And she is the wife of Henry N. Coleridge.

Prof. P. — I believe so. A family apparently of not unequal relations. This revolution of double and triple stars in the heaven of thought, is an apparition as rare as it is beautiful.

Rev. Mr. N. — Well! we cannot hope to get true lights in the seclusion of our little obscure village. I think I have heard this book ridiculed as unintelligible, and even silly.

Prof. P. — Nay, even here there may be persons sufficiently obtuse so to receive it. The imagination is now so little exercised, and the mind's natural religion so tyrannized over by the understanding, that a work of poetic character like this is not received at once. The beauty and meaning of the realm of faery is so far forgotten, that its histories are scarcely tolerated even in the nursery; it cannot then be expected that a legitimate successor should find ready welcome in the drawing-room and library.

Rev. Mr. N. — Is it a fairy tale then?

Prof. P. — It uses fairy machinery, but with a human significance. It is the old but never worn out subject of the progress of a young mind from innocence to virtue, from perception to knowledge. The forms of the insect world are borrowed to facilitate this progress, so that Phantasmion flies where others creep.

Rev. Mr. N. — Is this meaning obvious, or am I indebted for it to your own ingenuity?

Prof. P. — It is not brought forward with the stiff, good sense of English allegory, nor can you find it if you hunt in every fold of the narrative. You will find much painting for the pleasure of painting, frequent ebullitions of youthful fancy. But the work is sufficiently leavened with such a meaning, to be homogeneous.

Rev. Mr. N. — I see there are snatches of poetry here and there.

Prof. P. — Yes, the narrative floats on in a gentle recitative, sometimes where there is a particular feeling or word to be expressed breaking into verse, — so should poetry be written always. The mere narrative of life should not be submitted to the shackles of metre, but prose alternate with verse, as lawns and paths with the gay parterres of the garden.

Rev. Mr. N. — This is not silly! [*Reads the Lines.*]

"How high yon lark is heavenward borne,
Yet, ere again she hails the morn,
Beyond where birds can wing their way,
Our souls may soar to endless day,
May hear the heavenly choirs rejoice,
While earth still echoes to her voice.

"A waveless flood, supremely bright,
Has drowned the myriad isles of light;
But ere that ocean ebb'd away,
The shadowy gulf their forms betray,
Above the stars our course may run,
'Mid beams unborrowed from the sun.

"In this day's light what flowers will bloom,
What insects quit the self-made womb!
But ere the bud its leaves unfold,
The gorgeous fly his plumes of gold,
On fairer wings we too may glide,
Where youth and joy no ills betide.

"Then come, while yet we linger here,
Fit thoughts for that celestial sphere,
A heart which, under keenest light,
May bear the gaze of spirits bright,
Who all things know, and nought endure
That is not holy, just, and pure."

Prof. P. — And this song of Melledine's, —

"Blest is the tarn which towering cliffs o'ershade,
Which, cradled deep within the mountains breast,
Nor voices loud, nor dashing oars invade;
Yet e'en the tarn enjoys no perfect rest,
For oft the angry skies her peace molest,
With them she frowns, gives back the lightning's glare,
Then rages wildly in the troubled air.

"This calmer lake, which potent spells protect,
Lies dimly slumbering through the fires of day,
And when yon skies with chaste resplendence decked,
Shine forth in all their stateliest array,
O then she wakes to glitter bright as they,
And view the face of heaven's benignant queen
Still looking down on hers with smile serene.

"What cruel cares the maiden's heart assail,
Who loves, but fears no deep-felt love to gain,
Or, having gained it, fears that love will fail!
My power can soothe to rest her wakeful pain,
Till none but calm delicious dreams remain,
And while sweet tears her easy pillow steep,
She yields that dream of bliss to ever welcome sleep."

Is not that truly musical? It seems to float upon the lyre. And what an uncommon degree of elegiac sweetness in Penselimer's song:—

“The sun may speed or loiter on his way,
May veil his face in clouds, or brightly glow;
Too fast he moved to bring one fatal day,
I ask not now if he be swift or slow.

“I have a region, bathed in joyous beams,
Where he hath never gilded fruit or flower,
Hath ne'er lit up the glad perennial streams,
Nor tinged the foliage of an Autumn bower.

“Then hail the twilight cave, the silent dell,
That boast no beams, no music of their own;
Bright pictures of the past around me dwell,
Where nothing whispers that the past is flown.”

Rev. Mr. N. — But I do not see marks of distinguished genius in these verses.

Prof. P. — Surely, no! I never said you would, — yet has the book the fragrance of genius. For it is the spontaneous melody of solitary hours, the vision ever ready for the eye, which looks out with ardor and purity into nature. Read a got-up book made for profit and fame, as too many are now, and then turn to this genuine record of the life of mind, and you will feel the difference. Especially do I delight in the sense of relationship with nature which pervades this book.

Rev. Mr. N. — Are there not many works of this sort to be found in German literature?

Prof. P. — Of this sort; yet not like this. The Germans listen reverently to the voices within and without, and consequently often discover a fine perception of those analogies between the forms of external nature and those of thought, which have as yet been so imperfectly analyzed, that they may be called mysterious. Tieck and Novalis delight in reproducing those harmonies, which bind the visible world into one hymn with the soul of man. There is a bright ray from this source in the little Romance of Undine. But always the Germans are deficient in plastic grace, and trust too much in the earnestness of the reader; — the torch burns clearer in an English atmosphere.

Rev. Mr. N. — Was not Vathek, which Byron admired so much, a work of this class?

Prof. P. — No! Vathek was a satire. Beneath all the Eastern brilliancy of paint and gilding, you detect the scaffolding of English life; or rather it is the life of its author, a life of unchecked impulse, and tastes refined even to depravity, linked with a prophecy of mournful significance. Phantasmion is a work of pure imagination, and its truth is not that of experience, but of the young soul's desire for the beautiful, the perfect.

Rev. Mr. N. — How deep is the philosophy of Fiction!

Prof. P. — 'T is true, — fable has not yet found its historian and critic. When it does, Phantasmion has enough of individuality to find a place on the English page, — a page so rich, and yet so poor.

Rev. Mr. N. — You talk riddles.

Prof. P. — O they will be explained in my great work on the Philosophy of Fiction.

Rev. Mr. N. — One of the numerous great works you promise your friends.

Prof. P. — Ah, you may well laugh, but the world seems still so rich, and keeps me so busy, I cannot as yet stand still long enough to write down what I think on any subject.

Rev. Mr. N. — Well, *en attendant*, I will buy Phantasmion.

Prof. P. — Ah! do so; this little song shall reward you for it: —

"The spring returns, and balmy budding flowers
Revive in memory all my childish hours,
When pleasures were as bright and fresh, though brief,
As petals of the May or silken leaf.

"But now when king-cups ope their golden eyes,
I see my darling's brighten with surprise,
And rival tints that little cheek illumine,
When eglantine displays her richest bloom.

"Dear boy! thou art thy mother's vernal flower,
Sweeter than those she loved in childhood's hour,
And spring renews my earliest ecstasy,
By bringing buds and fresh delights for thee."

Here is another little volume for you.

Rev. Mr. N. — "Poems and Essays by Jones Very" ——. I do not remember ever to have heard of it.

Prof. P. — Its circulation is limited, its merits unobtrusive. But in these little poems, though unfinished in style, and homely of mien, you will find an elasticity of spirit, a genuine flow of thought, and an unsought nobleness and purity almost unknown amid the self-seeking, factitious sentiment, and weak movement of our overtaught, and over-ambitious literature, if, indeed, we can say we have one. The essays, also, are full of genuine thought, but not, I think, of just criticism. The author seeks too resolutely for unity, and loses sight of condition. Especially is this the case in the Essays on Shakspeare and Hamlet. He has not found the centre of the Shakspearean circle, and he has strained many points in the attempt.

Rev. Mr. N. — Singular! how little worthy criticism exists on Shakspeare.

Prof. P. — Surely, a dozen or more fineries by Schlegel, two or three just views by Goethe, and some invaluable hints by Coleridge, are all I know of. Amid such destitution, Mr. Very's observations seem well worth considering. His view, whether you agree with it or not, boasts a height and breadth not unworthy of his subject; and in details, he is delicate and penetrating.

Rev. Mr. N. — One would think it were scarce possible to avoid

making some true remarks on the truths of Shakspeare. Why don't you yourself write some notes upon him? You have been living upon his bounty all your days. If you gave only your own experiences, you could scarce fail to make an interesting paper.

Prof. P. — Ah! it is too daring, too like writing critiques on the sun and moon and stars. I might, however, write on *Very*, and imply my thought by finding fault with his.

Rev. Mr. N. — That is European finesse! We are more direct in New England. Well, I will buy this too, though I do not like sonnets.

Prof. P. — Nor I. The Muse does not appear to advantage in a hoop petticoat; and spite of Wordsworth's pretty defence, I think the sonnet more like a padlock on thought, than a golden key to unlock it.

Rev. Mr. N. — I do not remember his defence.

Prof. P. — I dare say, Wordsworth is yet far from being a household god among us, though the critics have apotheosized him. However, we have at least gained the privilege of finding his poems everywhere, and in an American edition too. So I will read it to you now, lest you never think of it more: —

"Scorn not the Sonnet; Critic, you have frowned,
Mindless of its just honors; with this Key
Shakspeare unlocked his heart: the melody
Of this small Lute gave ease to Petrarch's wound;
A thousand times this Pipe did Tasso sound;
Camões soothed with it an Exile's grief;
The Sonnet glittered a gay myrtle Leaf
Amid the cypress with which Dante crowned
His visionary brow: a glow-worm Lamp,
It cheered mild Spenser, called from Fairy-Land
To struggle through dark ways; and when a damp
Fell round the path of Milton, in his hand
The String became a trumpet, whence he blew
Soul-animating strains! — Alas, too few!"

Rev. Mr. N. — I thank you truly.

Prof. P. — You were never more welcome. I know no higher pleasure of beneficence than to rouse attention to some before unnoticed passage in Wordsworth.

Rev. Mr. N. — Well, I must go now. I am well provided. Journals of a Man of Taste, Visions of a Youthful Poetess, Criticisms by a Seeker after Unity, Sonnets which are good, spite of being Sonnets. My home circle will be entertained to purpose, these winter evenings.

Prof. P. — Write me what you think of *Very*; whether he does not carry out the promise of these lines of his: —

"There is no moment but whose flight doth bring
Bright clouds and fluttering leaves to deck my bower;
And I within, like some sweet bird must sing,
To tell the story of the passing hour;

For time has secrets that no bird has sung,
Nor changing leaf with changing season told;
They wait the utterance of some nobler tongue,
Like that which spoke in prophet tones of old."

Rev. Mr. N. — I will write, — or, perhaps, when I come again to town, we will meet here, and I will tell you how I like these volumes, and seek your direction in choosing as many more.

Prof. P. — Whenever you please; it is delightful to me to play the critic at so cheap a rate, and become a spiritual director without paying the penalty of Jesuitism.

The Poetical Works of Edmund Spenser. First American Edition: with Introductory Observations on the *Faerie Queen*, and Notes by the Editor. Boston: Little & Brown. 1839. 5 vols. 8vo. and 12mo. The public are under no slight obligation to Messrs. Little & Brown for this first American edition of the poetical works of Spenser. Spenser has long ranked among the most eminent poets in the English language, and for fertility of imagination, sweetness, and high moral aims, is surpassed by few poets in any age or country. His works are but partially known to our community, and chiefly for the want of an edition adapted to popular circulation. This want can no longer exist. The edition before us is every way such an edition as we should desire. It is one of the finest specimens of typography ever issued from the American press, and competes not unsuccessfully with the best productions of the English press. It proves that we are carrying in this city the typographical art to a degree of perfection quite creditable to the country. The editor has also done his duty. He deserves praise not less for what he has forborne to do, than for what he has done. He has done all that was necessary to render his author intelligible to the general reader, and has forborne to use the occasion offered him to display his Elizabethan lore. He loves his author, and has edited his works with a sincere affection. Obsolete terms he has explained, and such notes as were necessary to unfold a difficult meaning he has given, and there he has stopped. This is high praise. Nothing vexes us so much as the constant obtrusion of the editor, when we are reading a favorite author. We are willing the editor should help us understand his author; but it is the author, not his editor, that we wish to read. Would that Shakspeare's editors knew this, and so stand back and let Shakspeare speak for himself. Mr. Hillard has in the present case done a real service to his author, by doing just enough in the way of annotation, and not too much. He has proved himself an accomplished scholar, possessed of good sense and good taste.

Of Spenser himself we need not speak; hereafter we may perhaps bring him more distinctly before our readers, for our own pleasure; but he needs no commendation from critics and reviewers. His rank among English poets is fixed; his name is among the immortals, and the age which reproduces and relishes his works writes its own eulogium.

EDITOR.

Dramas, Discourses, and other Pieces. By JAMES A. HILLHOUSE. Boston: Little & Brown. 1839. 2 vols. 12mo. — The publishers have done their duty to these volumes, and given them to us in a style which it is a pleasure to behold. It is a luxury to look on such a page as we have here. We speak thus warmly of the style in which these volumes are sent forth, because we think the time has come to pay altogether more attention to the typographical dress in which our publications are sent out. Eyes are of some importance, and a taste for art in its highest perfection is worth cultivating. Of the dramas and other pieces, here republished with revisions and alterations, we have not much to say. Mr. Hillhouse is a respectable poet, a tolerable versifier, always moral, and seldom without a good degree of manliness and elevation. "Demetria," which is here published for the first time, we have not been able, notwithstanding repeated trials, to read, and therefore pass it over unjudged. "Hadad" has one essential vice, the introduction of a supernatural personage, where nothing is accomplished beyond the powers of ordinary mortals. If Hadad had been presented to us as he appeared, the real prince of Damascus, and not as a demon, the drama would have deserved much praise. It contains many passages of considerable beauty and power. "Percy's Masque" is creditable to the poet, and we have read it with deep interest. The other pieces we have not read, excepting Bishop Percy's *Hermit of Warkworth*, one of the finest ballads in the language, and which Mr. Hillhouse has done well to republish, although it casts his own poetry into the shade. Of the discourses we do not think much. Their style is decent, but the thought is only so so.

EDITOR.

The Philosophy of Human Life. Being an Investigation of the Great Elements of Life. By AMOS DEAN, Professor of Medical Jurisprudence in the Albany Medical College. Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb. 1839. 12mo. pp. 300. — The character of this work is told when we announce that it is written by a Phrenologist, and as well written, and with as much ability as the better class of phrenological works. It is as good as far as it goes, as any of George Combe's works, and somewhat less unreadable. Between phrenology and true philosophy there is, in our judgment, a distance. So we cannot commend the work as a satisfactory work on the Philosophy of human life, but we can conscientiously commend it to all Phrenologists; and have no doubt that they will find it edifying. We commend to them especially, the assertion, that to the simple existence of matter, "time and space are the only essential conditions." This being the case, we can have matter without a God, unless God belong to the categories of time and space. Time and space being all that is essential to its existence, a God to create it is of course superfluous. "Will," the author informs us, "is the decision of the whole mind upon the whole matter." This indicates a psychology formed by means of the scalpel, at least by means of manipulation of skulls. We had foolishly supposed that will is the power, or faculty,

of resolving to do or not to do. Decision we have been in the habit of predicating, not of will, but of intellect. Various motives are presented to the individual for acting. The intellect takes cognizance of these motives, weighs them, and decides which *ought* to be followed. This is all independent of the will. But when the motives have been weighed, a judgment formed, and the course which reason dictates determined, then the will steps in and says, "I will or will not follow this course." Motives are not, as too many have supposed, addressed to the will, but to the reason. Hence, the notion which many have, that we must always will to act in obedience to the strongest motive, is far from being self-evident. The reason must undoubtedly decide according to the strongest motive, but we may will to act even against the decisions of our reason. We are far from always resolving to do what we believe we ought to do. So have we been accustomed to view the matter; but our phrenological philosopher doubtless is right, — at least he thinks so. Is this volume to make a number of the Common School Library? Does the honorable Board of Education propose to bring up our children in the phrenological creed? If so, it becomes believers in the Gospel to look to the matter.

EDITOR.

Pictures of Early Life; or Sketches of Youth. By MRS. EMMA C. EMBURY. Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon, and Webb. 1839. 18mo. pp. 308. — This is a very clever little book, which one may read with much pleasure. It breathes a kindly spirit, and evidently comes from a pure and well-cultivated mind. Its tone is moral and religious, and it does great credit to the heart of its fair author. It is designed, we perceive, to make one of the Common School Library, which the Board of Education have undertaken to furnish us. Viewed in reference to this destination, we do not think much of it. It contains sentiments which a large portion of the good people of this Commonwealth will call sectarian. The Unitarians will hardly swallow it; the Universalists and Infidels will condemn it altogether. And what right has government to lend its sanction to works containing doctrines which many good citizens must disapprove? It can legitimately know no distinction between a Calvinist and a Universalist, a believer and an unbeliever. Nevertheless, we like the book very well, and have read several of the tales not without having our eyes overflow.

EDITOR.